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**LANGUAGES IN  
HISTORY AND POLITICS**



# LANGUAGES IN HISTORY AND POLITICS

*By*

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

*By* SIR GEORGE ANDERSON

I WELL remember sitting in my office in New Delhi one afternoon in January 1936, when the telephone bell rang: 'The *Statesman* office speaking; we regret to inform you that Dr. Woolner died in Lahore this morning.' I knew that Woolner had been very ill, but recent letters had given hopes that he had survived the crisis of his long illness. The news came to me as a terrible shock. I realized at once that the University of the Panjab had lost its eminent Vice-Chancellor, that the world of letters had lost a learned scholar, that innumerable people, including myself, had lost a trusted friend.

After receiving his education at Ipswich and Trinity College, Oxford, Woolner came out to India as far back as 1903 as Principal of the Oriental College, Lahore, and as Registrar of the University. He served a long apprenticeship in the latter capacity, and it was not until 1920 that he was appointed to the new post of Dean of University Instruction, when it became his difficult task to develop a scheme of university teaching within the cramping limits of an unreformed affiliating (Woolner always pronounced the word affiliating) University. His qualities and devotion to the University were somewhat tardily recognized, but he was appointed Vice-Chancellor in 1928 and continued as such until the day of his death in 1936.

A service extending over thirty-three years to a single institution is a long period in any country, but especially so in India, where changes in personnel are unusually abrupt and frequent. The actual length of his service was brought home to myself and to others on the occasion of the opening of the temporary quarters of the University Students' Union in a wing of the Council Hall when, to his evident delight and with due solemnity, Woolner unlocked the door of what had been his old home twenty-five years before and declared the building open.

During those long years Woolner served the University with judgement and skill; it was a fitting appreciation of his labours that, on the occasion of its jubilee, he was awarded the honorary degree of D.Litt. by the University. It is difficult to think of the University without his presence, and the memory and influence of this single-hearted scholar will long remain.

Few men have had better opportunity than I have had of close association with Woolner and of benefiting by his long experience. It was my good fortune that, as Chairman of the Panjab University Committee, in 1932-3, I had Woolner as one of my colleagues; and I know well that every other member of the Committee would voice similar opinions. His knowledge of the intricacies of university regulations was profound, and he interpreted them to us with unruffled patience and with crystal clarity of speech; but what was of infinitely greater value was his fine judgement. He had his ideals on the future development of the University, which were portrayed in the report which he signed; but he knew also by instinct and by experience the manner and the time in which changes should be introduced. He was essentially what may be termed a good committee man. He was ever reluctant to speak, but though at times he gave to the unguarded the impression of somnolence, he was ever a good listener and was always taking stock of what was going on around him. Many a time would an incautious member of a committee be taken aback by some pertinent question or by some wise observation by the Vice-Chancellor, who would then guide discussion into more fruitful channels. He also possessed, in ample measure, the priceless gift of humour; at times, even in moments of grave tension, would his large frame be convulsed by laughter as he pointed to some amusing aspect which had escaped the attention of his wrangling colleagues.

It might be inferred that the dull routine of university administration and the innumerable meetings which he attended would have narrowed Woolner's vision and limited his interests, but such was very far from being the case. He amply fulfilled the early promise which he gave by winning

the Boden Scholarship in 1901. His contributions to oriental learning and philology included an introduction to Prakrit, several Sanskrit translations, and in 1924 the text and glossary of Aśoka. The present volume was unfortunately unfinished, but it serves to emphasize the maturity of his scholarship and the width of his learning. But it was his scholarly attitude rather than his scholarly pen that will be best remembered. It was characteristic of him that, on being invited to deliver the Convocation address at Patna University in 1934, he left the beaten tracks and selected for his subject the general aspects of morality in the Edicts of Aśoka.

A few excerpts from that memorable address merit repetition:

‘One aspect of the moral law—or morality, which the Emperor Asoka stressed—was respect for the tenets of other people rather than the blind glorification of one’s own sect. “For whosoever praises his own sect or blames other sects, all through devotion to his own sect in order to glorify his own sect—by so doing injures his own sect more gravely.” “Other sects ought to be duly honoured in every case.” This ancient praise of sympathetic toleration may well be pondered in modern days. The development of the modern State demands an extension of this aspect of the moral law. Ideal justice may be unattainable. Yet those who deliberately seek it will approach the ideal more nearly than those who regard justice as an illusion and seek only the aggrandisement of the self, or, as Aśoka said, of one’s own sect.’

Coming from Woolner, these remarks seemed apposite to the occasion. Indeed, in these days of communal exclusiveness and intolerance in India, they were peculiarly apposite. A direct approach to this thorny subject would probably have failed, as, indeed, many such approaches by others have actually failed; but Woolner’s indirect and scholarly approach evoked a ready appreciation.

Though the nature of his work confined him very largely to Lahore, Woolner took part in educational and other activities outside the province. He was a member of the Inter-University Board from the outset and took his turn as Chairman of that body. He also took great interest in libraries

and in their administration; he was a member of the Council of the Imperial Library in Calcutta. It was ever his aim that this important institution should serve a wide area and be of benefit to scholars and readers throughout India.

Woolner was a man of wide interests and accomplishments. He was a linguist of no ordinary calibre; he included Spanish among his acquirements and, as occasional lectures showed, was familiar with the writings of Ibañez in the original. He was ever ready to widen his interests and was a great traveller. He paid frequent visits to the College of France in Paris, and the life of a student was always congenial to him.

These scholarly gifts and wide interests gave Woolner a position in the life of Lahore that few have attained; and this position was used unostentatiously as a means for softening the differences which were ever around him; and, in particular, for uniting all races and communities in a bond of learning and fellowship. For many years, he and Mrs. Woolner ran almost single-handed—it is impossible to regard them as anything but one—the Minerva Club and thus provided frequent opportunities for study and discussion. Their home became a natural meeting-ground, in which the differences of race and religion had no place.

Woolner was no bookworm. Though he possessed little proficiency in games, he loved his game of tennis. It was often my joy and privilege to make a fourth with him and Mrs. Woolner (wielding her Cochet racket), and though our skill was defective, we enjoyed ourselves as much as if we had been Davis Cup champions. Woolner was also a great walker and made light of distances which would have proved too exacting for most other men. On most evenings of the week (unless there were university meetings) he and his wife were to be seen striding along the canal bank outside Lahore. And he usually preferred to walk while he discussed. On many occasions did I go over to his house for discussion. 'Let's go into the garden' were often the words which greeted my arrival; and for hours at a stretch would I struggle to keep pace with him as he walked. After these visits, I used to return rich in the advice that he had given, but at the same time footsore and weary. It was on these occasions that I

learned to know and to respect the man ; it was his kindness and his judgement that made to me the greatest appeal.

I would add a few words on Woolner's exterior. He was well built and of somewhat massive proportions ; his presence was dignified and stately ; and his beard, which he wore even in his Oxford days, seemed both natural and imposing. He could not pass unnoticed in any company, but he often gave the impression of extreme austerity. Then, all of a sudden, his face would be lit up by the merry twinkle in his eye and the real man that was within him would appear.

It is impossible, as I have already suggested, to think of Woolner apart from his wife. They were inseparable. They tramped the Himalayas together ; they walked along the canal bank together ; they studied in France together ; they played tennis together ; they read together. But, for a time, they are now parted. Woolner will long be remembered as a university administrator and a scholar ; but perhaps the most enduring of his achievements was the influence which he and his wife spread around them both in India and beyond.



## INTRODUCTION

QUAND la mort l'a surpris, Woolner préparait un ouvrage qui devait dépasser en importance le reste de ses travaux : il ne s'agissait de rien moins que de montrer le lien entre l'histoire des langues et l'histoire générale de la civilisation. De cet ouvrage il n'existe que le fragment présenté ici ; et aucun plan, aucune confidence ne permettent de deviner ce qui manque, ni la proportion entre ce qui existe et ce qui manque. Avait-il en vue, comme le feraient attendre les dimensions des chapitres VI-VII, de grands chapitres sur les principales langues européennes occidentales modernes, sur le russe, sur les grandes langues asiatiques autres que l'arabe : sanskrit, pali, chinois ? Ou bien les chapitres sur les langues de l'Italie ancienne sont-ils ce qu'ils sont parce que Woolner n'a pas eu le temps de les faire plus brefs ? Avait-il l'intention de développer dans une vaste conclusion les considérations générales annoncées à la fin du § 1, ou encore de terminer par un tableau du monde présent et de donner directement sur des questions controversées, et spécialement à l'usage des Indiens à qui le lecteur averti peut reconnaître qu'il pensait toujours, des avis motivés, déjà discrètement annoncés au cours du livre ? On ne sait.

Ce doute n'a pas été sans conséquence pour ceux qui ont été à même de voir le manuscrit existant. Un sujet incomplètement traité restait-il digne d'être publié ? Une pensée incomplètement exprimée ne risquait-elle pas d'être trahie ? Il a semblé que la question qu'il fallait poser d'abord était celle que Woolner aurait sans doute posée la première : la publication serait-elle ou non utile ? C'est cette préoccupation en effet qui fait, semble-t-il, l'unité de la carrière scientifique de Woolner : ce grand éducateur dirigeait ses travaux de façon à fournir aux étudiants les documents et l'exemple dont ils lui paraissaient avoir besoin. Manuels jusqu'alors inexistants, brèves synthèses de questions générales, éditions pratiques de textes d'intérêt fondamental, traductions mettant à la disposition de chacun certaines œuvres récemment découvertes, à propos desquelles la

connaissance des faits risquait d'être noyée sous l'abondance des controverses: voilà ce qu'ont été la plupart des travaux de Woolner. Ils témoignent d'une méthode sûre et d'une compétence très avertie; mais leur marque particulière est la simplicité et la lucidité, et une impersonnalité voulue: car il visait non l'admiration, mais l'utilité.

Considéré de ce point de vue, il a paru que ce nouveau travail méritait d'être mis entre les mains des étudiants. Les étudiants indiens d'abord, à qui Woolner pensait constamment, et dont l'horizon en matière linguistique est le plus souvent, sans qu'il y ait de leur faute, borné à l'Inde; or la méthode linguistique, pour être féconde, a besoin d'être fondée sur une base étendue et variée; en particulier les faits européens, anciens et modernes, qui ont été étudiés plus à fond, et de points de vue plus divers que les autres, fournissent des types de questions et des indications de recherche susceptibles, sinon de renouveler, en tout cas d'élargir et d'approfondir la linguistique indienne. Les étudiants de 'l'Ouest' aussi auront, ce me semble, avantage à utiliser ce livre; d'abord, bien entendu, pour ce qu'il contient d'expérience exotique; mais surtout, s'il est vrai qu'un élève de Meillet et de Sylvain Lévi reconnaît assez souvent en lisant ces pages l'expression d'idées familières à ces maîtres (dont Woolner s'était fait lui aussi l'élève), il s'aperçoit aussi que ces idées ont pris place dans un nouvel ensemble, qu'elles ont été repensées par un nouvel esprit, qu'elles sont fournies d'exemples nouveaux et adaptées à des situations particulières. Ainsi le livre, même fragmentaire, reste digne de son auteur, et assez nouveau et utile pour être proposé au public.

Jules BLOCH

*Février 1938*



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

#### 1. *Definition of the Subject*

THE subject proposed for study—Languages in History—differs from the History of Languages. The difference may be indicated by the parallel example of Religions in History and the History of Religions.

A History of Religions would relate the inner history of each religion, or of each of the greater religions, in turn. Incidentally, one religion might be influenced by another. Occasionally the external history of a particular religion or sect, with the struggles of its followers and the adherents of other creeds, may become for a while the dominant fact in the development of that religion or sect. Generally, however, the inner development, the essential meaning of a religion, is not greatly affected by its temporal successes or failures.

On the other hand, in the general history of lands and peoples religion has obviously been an enormously powerful factor. All the laws and regulations of the earliest societies were religious. Later on, ideas sanctioned by religion continued to exercise the strongest influence on many aspects of civilization—law, the structure of society, the arts and literature. Moreover religious wars have repeatedly absorbed the energies of many countries. Religious inquisitions and persecutions have sometimes left a lasting stamp upon a people. If then we were dealing with Religions in History, we should be concerned with religions as factors in history rather than with changes in doctrine. We should be concerned with the external rather than with the internal history of the various creeds. Again, we should probably not be content with the bare narration of facts, but seek to disentangle the general tendencies illustrated by those facts.

Similarly a History of Languages would purport to be a history of all the languages, or of all important languages in turn. The history of a language from the point of view of a linguist is primarily internal. It deals with the development

of its structure, with changes in its pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax. Incidentally, to account for an abundance of borrowed words, mention may be made of contact with other peoples, as when English borrowed so many words from France—and later quite a number from all over the world. More rarely, linguists trace more intimate matters, such as peculiarities of pronunciation and tendencies of idiom to the influence of a *substratum*; that is, of the speech habits of a people who formerly used another language. In the main, however, the inner history of a language can ignore the existence of other languages.

In the general history of the world the importance of language is less obvious than that of religion. Language is the paramount means of communication in human societies, it is the vehicle of thought including religion; but there have been no great wars to impose a language on the speakers of another tongue. In dealing with great masses of population historians often pay very little attention to the language of any but the conquerors or the ruling caste. It is only in comparatively modern times that certain governments have pursued definite linguistic policies—often with unhappy results—and since the Great European War, language is regarded as a more important factor in the self-determination of states than it ever was before.

In discussing Languages in History we shall be concerned with the external history of any language rather than with details of its inner development. Further, our consideration of the facts we may be able to collect will aim at tracing general tendencies in that history. Some languages develop and spread over wide areas, while other languages disappear. What are the factors which determine their rise and fall? Is the world so much poorer or so much richer for every tongue that dies? Has any language any inherent capacity to expand? When does a language gain the right to survive? How far is a single language essential to a strong nation, to a dominant religion, or to a stable civilization? Any attempt to answer such questions will naturally begin by endeavouring to discover what has happened in the past, and then consider what may be new factors in the modern world.

## 2. *Scope and Method of Inquiry*

A logical method of proceeding with our inquiry, it might seem, would be to collect the available information regarding the many languages of the world, dead and living, and then to attack the general questions in the light of the facts collected. Such a method of exposition, however, would have serious disadvantages.

The number of languages in the world is very large, and in the past comparatively little information has been recorded as regards the details of their growth. Even where information is extant, it has often to be collected by the laborious research of specialists, and such researches into the external or social history of languages are not yet very numerous. So any sort of encyclopaedic statement would necessarily be very incomplete. It would be unsatisfactory from the point of view of linguists and wearisome reading for any one else.

It is proposed, then, to give rather a review of the whole field, selecting and emphasizing what seems more important for our purpose—and not to aim at completeness.

We must say something of the Families of Language and of the relationship of certain languages to each other: but this will be only introductory to our main interest. When we come to review the history of languages, it will be evident that a few of them are of much greater importance for our subject than hundreds of others: either because much more is known about them, or because they have played a greater part in social history. Whatever conclusions we may arrive at or suggest at the end, there are certain problems that we need to have in view from the beginning. That is not by any means to say that we shall select facts to support any pre-conceived ideas; rather that it will be of interest to observe, as we go along, how the facts are fitting in with certain current notions, or the reverse.

## 3. *Multiplicity of Languages*

Mankind has often been puzzled by the multiplicity of languages. Why should there be so many? If thought and language are the peculiar gifts of man distinguishing him

from beasts, why are languages mutually unintelligible? If language came to man from heaven, why does it vary so? Attempts to answer such questions have generally followed one of two lines. Either our own language is regarded as the real or properly human language and the language of heaven, all others being on a lower plane; or else some special reason is sought for the confusion of tongues.

#### 4. *Babel*

An example of the second method is the story of the Tower of Babel.

It is not necessary to stress the *naïveté* of the idea that the Creator of the Universe could be alarmed by the erection by humans of any mound or building less than a mile high on the surface of the earth. From another point of view the story is interesting as showing some comprehension of the multiplicity of tongues, and some appreciation of the fact that this made it difficult for huge numbers of men to work together. The story may indeed be an echo of a real difficulty felt by ancient tyrants constructing huge works with the labour of multitudes of slaves and captives. At any rate the collection of such multitudes in the King's capital would have served to give men a lively idea of the diversity of tongues.

#### 5. *Divine Language*

The other point of view is more usual. The Greeks regarded Greek as the proper human language and as the language of the Gods. Other tongues were used by 'barbarians', but the Greeks had very little interest in these. Hebrew, Arabic, Sanskrit, Latin, and Chinese have all been supposed to be the language of heaven. Probably all priests and their followers tend implicitly to regard the language of their scriptures as the divine language. Quite modern is the idea that in the other world all languages are understood, or that thought is transferred directly independently of human speech and its varieties. Peoples have varied in the degree of their exclusiveness. Perhaps the greatest contempt for foreign speech has been felt by the Greeks and the Chinese,

and yet, when Buddhism entered China, Sanskrit came to be held in high honour in that country.

The ancient Indians regarded Sanskrit as a sacred language, and had no interest in the languages of people they regarded as impure barbarians. Yet the languages of southern India, quite unrelated to Sanskrit, coming to be spoken by men of the highest caste, had to be accounted for somehow as aberrations from proper speech.

The Arabs, after the beginning of Islam, had no doubt that Arabic was the divine tongue. Yet they came to have a considerable respect for Greek learning, and it has never been essential for a Muslim to speak Arabic.

### 6. *Original Language*

Thus there has been a tendency to regard one or other of the many languages of the world as the only correct one, or as the original, of which all others are aberrations: if indeed they be not on another plane, like the languages of animals and birds, which some sages were supposed to understand.

Herodotus tells an amusing story of a Phrygian king who tried to determine by experiment which was the most ancient language. This story is an early example of the belief that a child is born with linguistic tendencies. The king realized, it is true, that these tendencies would be immediately counteracted by hearing another language. That children learn to speak by imitating others—their parents, nurse, and other children<sup>1</sup>—is generally recognized. At the same time there is a tendency to suppose that a child is born with a bias towards its parents' language, and perhaps, if the parents speak different languages, a bias towards the mother's language. This appears to be a delusion. Except in so far as some slight peculiarities of pronunciation may<sup>2</sup> require vocal organs of a certain shape or size, which are inherited, there is no reason to suppose that a child is born with a greater inherent capacity for any one language rather than another. This is not a matter in which it is easy to experiment. If a child of English or of Indian parents born in China were

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Jespersen, *Language*.

<sup>2</sup> This is very doubtful.

removed at birth and brought up in a Chinese home, there is no reason to suppose it would not grow up to speak the Chinese of its foster-parents. Similarly, a Chinese baby, if adopted soon enough by the proper parents, would speak perfect English, Cockney, or any English or American dialect—and nothing else. We may imagine that the anglicized Chinaman would have a tendency to think and talk like an ordinary Chinaman speaking English, but there seems to be no evidence to support that idea.

On the contrary there are examples of small foreign colonies which have completely lost their original language in the second or third generation without leaving the slightest trace in the local speech.

Our own language seems so essentially part of us, that it is difficult to imagine ourselves without it, speaking nothing but a different tongue. This feeling obscures the fact that our own language is a matter of imitation, habit, and tradition.

### 7. *Significance of Sounds*

Another idea about language which is ancient is that of the inherent significance of particular sounds.

Indian grammarians struggled long ago with the problem, why a particular word means what it does. What is the special quality in a group of sounds that gives it a particular meaning? This led to some subtle reflections. If all the sounds are necessary to give the meaning, then the meaning is not there till the last of the series arrives. But by that time the first sound is no longer there. Out of such considerations arose the doctrines of the eternity of sound and of *sphota*, the subtle element in sound that carries meaning.

The Greeks thought individual sounds were significant. Plato's discussion in the *Timaeus* is well known.

In all these discussions, it will be observed, the grammarians and philosophers are talking about their *own* language. To us the words of our own language are significant. Moreover, as there are groups of similar words with similar meanings, individual sounds can be regarded as expressive



of some general sense or quality. But when we travel outside our own language we begin to find that other people's words convey no meaning to us whatever. When by practice we become familiar with a foreign language, and are able to read, speak, and write it, and to some extent to think and dream in it, we may gain a similar illusion as to the peculiar appropriateness of its sounds to express their meaning. If, however, we compare the sounds used to express the same thing by a considerable number of dissimilar languages the illusion is soon dispelled. Practically the same sounds have utterly different meanings in various parts of the world. The varieties of sound-groups used for the same thing, the same quality, or the same action in different languages makes any analysis on Plato's lines impossible.

It is true that there are in every language a number of words which are based on the imitation of noises, e.g. *cuckoo*, *bang*, *pop*. The famous 'Bow-wow theory' of the origin of language attempted to derive all words from such imitation. It is true that words suggestive of sound are *expressive*, e.g. *scrunch*, *squelch*. But the number of such words is small. More doubtfully some sounds are supposed to be expressive of the feelings, and so there was the 'Pooh-pooh theory', but it will be found that different peoples express their feelings in different ways, and interjections like *ha*, *ho*, *oh*, *ah*, *pst*, *sh*, *pooh* do not carry us very far. It may be safely said that the meaning of 99 per cent. of every language is due solely to habit and tradition and not to any essential significance of sounds.

### 8. *Race*

Another notion which is more prevalent even to-day is that particular languages are the special property, or natural attribute, of particular races. This idea is sometimes applied to comparatively small groups—as when it is said that Bohemians ought to talk Čech, Irishmen Irish, Finns Finnish, and Albanians Albanian, because of their race—and sometimes it is applied to much larger groups—as when it is said that Slavs ought to retain a Slavonic language, or that Aryan languages are spoken by Aryans and that Semitic languages are peculiar to the Semitic race.

Again it appears quite natural to suppose that every language has originated with some particular race, and that every race had originally one particular language. Thus it is asked: To what race does the Basque language belong, What was the language of the Mediterranean race?

When, however, we go into details difficulties arise, as will appear more clearly later on. Here it will suffice to note one or two points. In the first place it is clear that all the speakers of e.g. English do not belong to the same race. There are countries speaking one language where there is evidence that the people are descended from ancestors of more than one race. We cannot suppose that in Spain, for example, only Latin blood has survived, although Spanish is derived from Latin.

To go a step farther, it is sometimes very difficult to know exactly what we mean by a *race*. Some two hundred million men, women, and children on the surface of the earth resemble each other more or less. Some of the physical variations are very striking when distinct types are chosen from very different areas. One could never make a mistake in sorting out Chinese, Scandinavians, and Negroes, even if they were all dressed in the same fashion. But with minor variations it is much easier to be deceived. Many Russians can pass as English; South Italians and North Indians have been mistaken each for the other. Apart from dress (including the treatment of the hair) no one could sort up a large European gathering with certainty according to their different 'races', let alone their different countries, by their physical appearance alone.

As a matter of fact the sorting out and labelling has been done by two different sets of persons, i.e. by philologists and by ethnologists.

The philologists of the last century, following what seemed to be a natural method, regarded all speakers of the same language as belonging to the same race and all speakers of similar languages as being ultimately related to each other. As we shall see, Sinhalese, the language of South Ceylon, is related to Icelandic. The two languages belong to the same family. It was concluded that the Sinhalese and Icelanders

belonged to the same 'Aryan' race, though they differ in appearance as much as either from Japanese. In other words, the philologists determined race according to language. Some mixture of blood they would admit, but there was a tendency to believe that the most successful races were those of 'pure descent' and that in mixed races that element was the most important which could impose its languages on the others. Nowadays it is recognized that such mixture has been the rule rather than the exception and that some of the most successful peoples have been the most mixed. Again we shall notice instances of people losing their own language, although they were by no means negligible elements of the population. For example, the Scandinavian colonists in the English Danelaw and the French Normandy. The 'Long Beards' of Lombardy were Germanic invaders of Italy. Now all their descendants speak Italian and pride themselves on their 'Latin blood'.

The ethnologists have classified men according to the shape of their heads, the section of their hair, the shape of their noses, and secondarily by stature, complexion, and other peculiarities. By this method a number of marked types are distinguished, which shade off into each other on the edges.

These definite types are regarded as race types, which are recognized more or less clearly in ancient cemeteries.

The division of mankind according to these types does not coincide with the linguistic classification. For instance, in Europe we are told the distinct racial elements are Mediterranean, Alpine, and Nordic. The philologists used to put all these together as Aryan. In the nearer East we hear of the Semitic type (represented by the Arab) and the Armenoid type with the hooked nose found among Jews and Afghans. But Hebrew is a Semitic language and the Afghans speak Pashtu which is Aryan.

We must be on our guard then against assuming that race and language coincide.

### 9. *Nationality*

From what has been said of language and race it will be obvious that there is little essential relation between race

type and nationality. It is a different question how far a common language is essential to a nation, or at any rate advantageous to it. An allied question is how the possession of a common language constitutes a claim to unite under one government. Such questions bring language into relation with politics, and will be dealt with later, but this aspect of linguistic history should be borne in mind during our historical review.

In the meantime we may note that, in Europe, Switzerland and Belgium are examples of compact nations, without a language peculiar to themselves, and each without a language spoken by all the people.

Danish and Norwegian are almost identical. Dano-Norwegian has been the literary language of Norway. But the Danes and Norwegians do not regard that fact as any reason for merging the two nations in one.

English is the language of the United States of America. That is no reason for the United States to annex the British Empire.

### 10. *Religion*

As language changes under the impact of new ideas, one might expect a change of religion to be a frequent cause of a change of language. In North Africa the spread of Arabic accompanied the spread of Islam. Similarly in Mesopotamia Arabic replaced what remained of older languages and Islam replaced the previous religions. In Persia Arabic did not replace the native language but influenced it profoundly. In all these countries, however, there was an Arabic invasion in considerable numbers, which has also to be taken into account. Moreover, Islam in these countries was more than a creed: it was a new way of life and soon became a foster-mother of learning. Farther afield Islam carried Arabic as the language of scripture and of learning, but did not root up the indigenous languages.

On the whole, it would appear that in historical times religions have spread the use of scriptural and learned languages, without changing the speech of the people. This is natural in systems where the priests do not encourage the laity to read the scriptures.

We find Christianity using Latin, Greek, Syriac, &c., as scripture languages. In the western half of Europe (and at one time in North Africa) the Christian clerics used Latin far beyond the area where Latin or any of its descendants were spoken by ordinary people. But so did all educated persons for official or literary purposes, before the local languages had developed sufficiently to take its place.

Buddhism, starting from India, has carried a knowledge of Pāli or of Sanskrit far afield, that is, among learned monks, but it has not displaced local forms of speech. Burma, Siam, Cambodia, and Tibet (not to speak of China and Japan that are not so completely Buddhist) have not adopted an Indian language with an Indian religion. In India itself there is nothing to indicate that the spread of Buddhism had any considerable effect on the development of the Indian languages.

The spread of Hinduism, it is true, has helped to engulf local tongues into the great mass of Sanskritic speech in northern India. But in the south of India, which has become the great stronghold of Hinduism, Dravidian languages hold their own. Again, Hinduism is not a creed so much as a system of life, a special form of civilization.

While then we have to correlate changes of creed and changes of language—especially in small communities without any literary development—it looks as if these changes were associated with others, such as colonization, political control, or types of civilization.

### 11. *Political Control*

In analysing the causes of the extension of languages over a wider area, we must consider the part played by political control. This may be a local matter, concerning only a comparatively small area, or it may be the government more or less centralized of a far-flung empire. In a small state, if two or more dialects are competing for predominance, the dialect which is used in the king's palace, in the law courts, and by the king's officers has an obvious advantage, though it may be only the fortune of war or some other accident that has fixed the capital in a particular corner of the state or has brought some particular clan into prominence. If, however,

the dynasty is intrusive and introduces a language from outside, there may be a conservative reaction against this foreign language; so that, even though the dynasty be absorbed, the language of the palace and of the courts is replaced by the language of the people. Thus in England, after the successful invasion by the Normans, Norman-French, their dialect, was the official language for two centuries but was then gradually ousted by English. In the growth of the kingdoms of Europe out of smaller principalities, duchies, and the like, the language of administration has often been an important factor in determining the development of the national language. A striking example can be seen in the history of French. What was originally the language of the Isle of Paris extended itself with the power of the king of France, till it covered nearly all the present area of France, as the language of the official classes, of the gentry, of the army, of the law courts, and, so far as Latin was not employed, of the universities and schools and of the Church. When the French Revolution threw the power of the king of France into new hands the language of the new Republic (including Napoleon's Empire) ramified more widely among the people. The common use of French extended even in areas like Brittany and Alsace where the people spoke a very different language.

An instance of the less successful dominance of the ruler's dialect is seen in Spain. Castilian, the language of the dominant kingdom, has not conquered the whole peninsula. Portugal it is true has maintained itself as a separate state, but even in the Spanish kingdom itself Barcelona has been a centre of rebellion associated with the use of Catalan. The value of a common language in the formation of a compact *national* state is undoubted, even though Switzerland shows it is not always necessary. This means, however, much more than the language of administration. States that have adopted linguistic policies and have enforced them with penalties have always gone deeper, striking at the language of private schools, of newspapers, and even of domestic life. The extension of French (as distinct from local patois) after the first French revolution was not merely the wider use of the language of administration as such. It was not merely due to

a scheme of popular education in state schools—though this was a very important element in the matter. It was also due to the force of the new ideas that were permeating all strata of society, and the enthusiasm for the new order and the rights of the ordinary man. All those ideas found expression in Paris, and were brought thence to the Provinces. Every new ‘citizen’ wished to understand and even to speak the language of the Republic.

In the older empires there were no linguistic problems. There was no conception of national unity. Orders were issued from the centre, and obeyed more or less by the viceroys and governors of outlying provinces, according to the strength and efficiency of the king of kings at the time. Often vassal kings were almost independent. In such an empire the orders of the great king could be translated into any number of languages as might be convenient, either at the centre or in the local courts. It is probably true that candidates for high command had to know the language of the royal court, but this would not have a profound effect. It is indeed impossible to determine, for instance, to what extent the use of Old Persian was necessary in the organization of the huge motley hosts which Darius and then Xerxes brought up against Greece.

The Roman Empire may seem an exception. The use of Latin spread with the Roman *imperium* far beyond the Italian peninsula. We shall see, however, that this was due not merely to the language of administration, but rather to colonization and to the spread of new ideas, including a literature, as well as material comforts, in fact, of a more developed civilization among peoples, who were less developed, but ready for it. The fading away of Latin in Britain and North Africa was due, as we shall see, to the intrusion of new factors in the Teutonic and Arabic invasions. Moreover, in the eastern half of the Empire, Greek held its own and Latin made little progress. A Roman administrator in Egypt or Asia Minor had to know Greek and that was the language used in his court. The spread of the Greek language followed colonization and the spread of Greek culture rather than the administration either of Pericles or of Alexander the Great.

12. *Colonization*

A simple way of changing the language of a small island is to expel or destroy all the inhabitants and start a new colony of speakers of the new language. It is not, indeed, necessary to remove all the inhabitants, but they should be reduced to a minority and made subservient to the newcomers. They may then teach their masters their own names of island products but probably not much else. In other words we must not conclude from a change of language that *all* the original inhabitants have been destroyed. Throughout a large part of Britain the Celtic languages (with some knowledge of Latin) disappeared before the invasion of Germanic dialects (Anglian and Saxon). It would be rash to conclude that all the Celts and all the Latin-speaking settlers were either slaughtered or driven into Wales and Cornwall.

We can, however, distinguish two types of colonization: one by compact bodies intruding as blocks in an alien mass, and the other by a mass which overruns a large area, seizing all the land and either destroying or enslaving their predecessors.

The first type can be illustrated by the Greek cities scattered from older centres round the shores of the Mediterranean, mainly in the eastern half but also as far west as South Italy and Marseilles. The hinterland behind most of these Greek colonies was occupied by other races with their own tongues, and the survival of Greek depended on the particular fortunes of each city or group of cities.

Another illustration of a special kind we shall find in the Roman *colonia*, the origin of course of our word 'colony'. Lands were assigned to veterans of the Roman army who were planted out in conquered territory and given a form of municipal government to hold them together. These Roman *coloniae*, as we shall see, served as centres for the new civilization introduced by the Roman legions and traders. As a third example we may take the more or less accidental settlements of a series of intrusive tribes in the same area. If these are mixed up together, without any influence strong enough to weld them into one nation, they produce the complicated



linguistic condition that is found in many parts of the Balkans.

Of colonization in mass we have examples in the great movements of tribes from the east of Europe and in the development of rural and urban populations in the New World of America. America was only sparsely inhabited, for the most part by tribes in the hunting stage of civilization, while the few cities were subjected to ruthless slaughter by the Spaniards. The European immigrants pushed aside or destroyed most of the original inhabitants, and though large numbers of American languages survive they have had very little effect on the European languages introduced (especially English, Spanish, Portuguese) and are steadily losing ground.

### 13. *Communications*

In the detailed study of linguistic boundaries attention must be given to geographical features which impede easy communication between two areas. Such features may be mountain chains, deserts, forests, arms of the sea, or wide rivers. In so far as these check large movements of population they hinder the consequent displacements of language. Again, in regions where ordinary travel for trade is difficult, local dialects remain longer unaffected by languages dominating wider and wider areas where movement is easier. Along trade routes travel foreign articles of commerce and with them very often foreign names, but languages are not otherwise affected unless the traders are sufficiently numerous to found considerable colonies.

On the other hand it must not be supposed that linguistic boundaries generally follow obvious geographical lines. Most natural obstructions are crossed in course of time, and in the absence of stronger competitors the same language may occur on both sides of difficult country, and related languages are found distributed over a very wide area indeed, crossing not only rivers and mountains but even oceans. Indeed, with the development of shipping mankind has found water the easiest medium of communication, and the lack of water in desert and arid mountains the greatest obstruction. We should note also that in mountains movement is always slow and frequently

blocked during winter. In secluded mountain valleys may generally be found surviving archaic forms of speech and remains of ancient languages that have completely disappeared elsewhere.

#### 14. *Literature*

The development of a literature is of fundamental importance in the history of a language, and indeed in the history of a people. By literature we mean something more than the ability to improvise and repeat songs and stories. That is only the germ. To be effective a literature must imply at least a tradition that extends over more than one generation and some conception of what is correct language. Usually this implies the use of writing, and incidentally our knowledge of the languages of the past is in general confined to those that have been recorded in writing. Oral tradition through many centuries is rare, though in India portions of the Vedic literature have been preserved in that way up to recent times.

If a literature is confined to a special social class or to a very limited number of persons two things are liable to happen. In the first place the literary language remains fixed and stationary, while the ordinary spoken speech goes on changing. Or a language may be used for literary purposes which is not the language of the masses but quite different. In the second place a literary language which is understood by very few persons has very little effect on spoken speech, it does not function effectively as a standard. If it is of a different type, the literary language can only supply some vocabulary to the vernacular speech. Again, if later on the ordinary speech develops a literature of its own, that new literature is liable to be despised by the learned and overlaid by the classical traditions. Instances readily suggest themselves both in Europe and in Asia.

When a literary language is more widely distributed, that is, when it is known and used by a larger percentage of a people, it tends to change imperceptibly with the changes of spoken speech, which at the same time it tends to retard. There is interaction between the two levels of speech.

At this stage the traditions of the literature are widely diffused and may form a powerful focus of national sentiment.

A language that has developed to this point is in a very different position from that of a mass of illiterate local dialects, more or less mutually intelligible but devoid of a standard and of a tradition. It will be found that a national literary language has much greater powers of resistance against natural or artificial movements which threaten its existence. We may say that a language which has developed a literature has become self-conscious and will no longer follow blindly the trend of circumstances. The more intimately that literature is associated with the life of the people, the more naturally it has evolved in that connexion, the greater its chance of forming a national asset and preserving the language in which it is written. If the literature has been specially created or resurrected for a nationalistic purpose, its position is much weaker. If, however, the renaissance of a decadent language and its literature is accomplished by very strong religious or national feeling this may go a long way towards compensating for a break in or weakening of tradition. Cornish has died out. Welsh has been preserved not merely by its literary tradition, which was stronger than that of Cornwall, but also by a religious revival, which made use of that language. In Ireland the literary tradition had been broken, and the nationalist sentiment about the Irish language is far from universal. In spite of official efforts to encourage Irish, the fact remains that most Irishmen can express themselves more easily in the language of England and the United States.

### 15. *Education and Compulsion*

A literature cultivated from generation to generation always implies some system of education at least for the few—the learned, the scribes, the clerics, or whatever the class may be. So long as letters are confined to the few, the literary language of the educated may be quite different from that of the masses of the people. When literacy expands and includes more and more people whose whole life is not devoted to letters, a dead language or a foreign language ceases to be satisfactory as a medium of expression—while a national

literary language can exercise an enormous influence on the speech of daily life. With the development of organized systems of education the problem has often arisen as to what language should be used as the medium of instruction in a particular area. In France organized state education dates from the Revolution. The patois or spoken dialects of the people varied greatly in different parts of France. The Provençal dialects of the south of France really represent a language different from that of the dialects of the north with their literary language of Paris.

In Brittany the people spoke a Celtic language imported long ago from Britain. Alsace and Lorraine spoke German. The language taught in all the state schools was French, the literary language of Paris and the old French court. This is the language that everybody wanted to learn so as to be *en rapport* with the new world of ideas, to feel himself really a citizen of the new republic. The French system of education has been based on the supremacy of the French language. The movement of *régionalisme*, a reaction against the great centralization of the French administrative machinery, including the organization of education, has never reached serious proportions. Quite recently, however, difficulties have been experienced with the German-speaking areas added to France after the Great War. In Great Britain and her colonies English dominated education and was thereby placed in a still stronger position. There was at first no demand for education in Welsh for Wales or in Gaelic for the Highlands of Scotland.

In Wales a religious revival saved the Celtic speech from fading away like Cornish. Interest revived in Welsh poetry and songs. Annual competitions continue to foster this interest. Yet there has been no serious antagonism with English. The use of Welsh has been tolerated and encouraged without disturbing the dominant position of English, with the result that a large proportion of the people are bilingual.

The Highlands of Scotland have shown less popular enthusiasm for the cultivation of Gaelic. The schools make less use of it than the Welsh schools do of Welsh. A large proportion of the Gaelic speakers are Roman Catholics, and as

a rule the Roman Church has not encouraged regional languages in face of world languages with a wider currency. Ireland seems to offer an exception to this general rule. Here the problem has been complicated by political factors, and part of the nationalist sentiment in favour of the Irish language (it is a delicate question to determine how large a part) is undoubtedly due to the fact that at one time the English deliberately tried to suppress the language. It remains to be seen to what extent a patriotic bias against English will dominate the educational system of the Irish Free State, and succeed either in reducing the general knowledge of English among the people (especially the poorer people who cannot travel far unless they emigrate), or in promoting the simultaneous use of the two languages, as in Wales. The Irish problem may remind us of other instances of linguistic strife, which are so readily associated with racial, political, or religious divergences.

Sometimes the struggle is between two closely related languages or dialects, as between Dano-Norwegian and native Norwegian in Norway: sometimes the struggle is between two distinct languages as between French and English in Canada, between French and Flemish in Belgium.

We find sometimes two national elements in the same state each seeking self-expression in its own type of speech, and each endeavouring to dominate the other. There have also been imperialistic attempts to suppress languages, either by direct prohibition, as the use of Polish was forbidden in Russian Poland, or by the general discouragement for which there are so many opportunities in an administrative machine.

Now in all these situations whoever can dominate the educational system obtains an enormous advantage for the propagation of a particular language. Yet we may find that, as there have proved to be limits to the ability of a great power to suppress a language, so also there are limits to what can be done by a political party or a doctrinaire bureaucracy in selecting and moulding a national language by means of education. So long as most people are indifferent their efforts may succeed, but once conscious opposition arises, whether

it be based on sentiment or on practical advantage, the temporary advantage becomes precarious.

A shift of power may bring about a reaction that will soon reverse the tendencies of previous decades.

At the same time two points seem clear. One is that the reaction will, in its turn, seize on the machinery of education for its own purposes. The other is that once a people has for a considerable time made use of a particular language for general purposes and taught it in a widely diffused system of education it is hardly possible to put the clock back abruptly and return to an older form of language, as if the intervening centuries had been blotted out.

The use of a particular type of language, especially a foreign language, may be gradually dropped as Norman-French dropped out of use in England, or as the use of Arabic declined in Persia about A.D. 1000, but the 'native' language which replaces it is never again the same as it was before the foreign domination.

The English that displaced Norman-French and followed it was not the English of 1066. The Persian that asserted itself after the Arabian domination was not the language of the Sassanides.

This principle cannot be less true when literacy is not confined to professional scribes but widespread among a people by a system of education.

### 16. *Ethical Problem*

Our final general topic is concerned not with the results of such factors as we have been considering—race, nation, religion, political domination, literature, and education—but rather with a general ethical problem.

On the one hand we see that great masses of people are, and have been, hardly conscious of the peculiarities of the language they use, and in the mass indifferent what language they use. On the other hand we see the growth of linguistic sentiment associated with a variety of factors. By various means churches and states more or less consciously and deliberately initiate linguistic policies, so that on one side there would seem to be a sort of natural process of selection

and there may be a tendency to assume that the language which survives was the fittest to survive.

On the other side there have been definite attempts to modify such natural tendencies and to use authority to promote a policy.

We shall have to ask the question whether there is any justification for a linguistic policy.

It may appear that such a policy is sometimes inevitable in a system of administration—that there must be either definite choice or else chaos.

It may also appear that sometimes the propagation of a language is incidental to the spread of a better form of civilization, or that it is convenient in the maintenance of order among discordant tribes and even essential in building up those larger human communities, that abstain as a rule from internal war.

From many points of view—such as the value of mutual comprehension, and universality of science pure and applied—it has been said that *the fewer the languages that survive the better for the world*.

To many such a doctrine savours of a dull uniformity and is suspected of political imperialism with ambitions for world domination. It is anathema to the regionalist, whether artist or poet, and to all the champions of minorities and sub-nationalities.

Can we say which tendency is better for the human race?

One solution of the antinomy is sought in bilingualism. If every educated person has a good knowledge of a world-language as well as of his local language, poetry and sentiment may be expected to find expression in the latter while the world-language brings the speaker into contact with wider horizons.

This still leaves ample opportunity for conflict between the local languages, though perhaps not on quite the same plane. If we consider the multiplicity of actual dialects, it will become clear that any kind of literary standard, and indeed any standard for mutual comprehension that is to extend beyond a very limited area, necessitates the suppression of some local variations.

As in other aspects of social life, the individual must sacrifice something to become a member of a larger society.

Language is essentially a social instrument. The recluse may talk only to himself, but he does it with a language he learned from others—and in the end solitude will warp his reason.

A hunting tribe or a remote mountain village, completely absorbed in its own affairs, may feel no need of communication with the rest of the world. The larger social units have need of free communication—they have developed languages more widely understood, which they have used as the instruments of their particular types of civilization.

The individual who stands apart and talks only to himself is in a sense anti-social—so is a group of individuals or a small district that insists on speaking and writing nothing but a local dialect understood only by themselves. If that be true, the justification of a linguistic policy is bound up with the justification of smaller and larger social units—smaller and larger human societies having regard to the geographical and cultural circumstances of particular peoples.

A social unit may of course include more than one political unit but connotes a mass of human beings conscious of a considerable amount of life in common.

As regards the justification of enormous human societies and of very tiny ones (especially if they be political units) opinions will differ. The balance of reasoned opinion may swing between the two extremes.

Whatever conclusion may be reached as regards particular problems, whatever may be the position of world languages in some centuries' time, three considerations seem to emerge from this discussion:

- (a) The whole course of human history has been in the direction of forming greater societies, the greater often overlapping the lesser, so that the individual tends to belong to more than one society at a time.
- (b) While linguistic difference is an obstacle to mutual understanding, the mere fact of speaking and writing the same language (or very nearly the same) does not necessitate homogeneous mentality or a common political state.



- (c) If any conclusion we may come to on a particular linguistic problem (many administrators and educationists have frequently to choose one side or the other) follows an examination of the factors involved, it may be based on general reasons very different from those commonly advanced by the champions of particular languages or dialects.

## CHAPTER II

### DEFINITIONS

#### I

IN the previous chapter we have used certain terms familiar to the general reader, such as language, dialect, and family of languages. It has been assumed that the ordinary meaning of these terms is understood. Indeed, the broad aspects of language with which we are concerned do not necessitate the use of numerous technical terms that are familiar only to the specialist. At the same time it may be well to be clear as to what exactly is implied by the terms we are using, and that will involve a brief non-technical review of the general nature and mechanism of language and of the ways in which languages change.

#### 2. *Language*

By *language* in general we mean human speech, that is, an activity or function whereby men express their thoughts and feelings by means of *articulate sounds* uttered with their *vocal organs*.

This definition excludes other means of expressing thought and feeling such as gesture and the 'expression' of the face, though the speakers of some languages constantly make much greater use of gesture and facial expression than do the speakers of other languages. The sound of clapping the hands, the sound of snapping the fingers, and so on are not uttered with the vocal organs and are not language, though they may be as expressive as many interjections. Similarly we exclude inarticulate, vague, and indefinite noises such as sniffing or kissing, or such as a roar of anger or of laughter, however expressive of meaning they may be.

*Articulate* means jointed, broken into successive parts like the stem of a bamboo. This jointing of a succession of speech-sounds is mainly effected by the alternation of consonants and vowels, which divide the stream of sound into successive syllables. It can be easily seen that the vocal organs (mainly

the throat and mouth) can produce vague noises which are not articulate and which therefore are not easy to repeat, to recognize, or to remember. Such sounds are excluded.

If, however, one is tempted to indulge in speculations with regard to the origin of human speech it may be borne in mind that undeveloped and imperfect speech is apt to be accompanied by gesture and inarticulate noises. It has been well said that language could only have developed out of something that was not yet language—that is, a stage in which something of elementary feeling and the germs of vague thought found expression and were communicated to others by means of inarticulate sounds and muscular reactions.

### 3. *A Language*

(a) We sometimes speak of the ‘language’ of an individual, meaning, not merely his style of speech in the colloquial sense as when we say ‘his language was lurid’, but rather the whole system of groups of sounds used by that person to express his meaning. It is commoner to speak of an individual’s ‘accent’ if his pronunciation is peculiar, of his ‘vocabulary’ or ‘dialect’ if he uses unusual words. Ordinarily we should ask of any individual—what language does he speak? This assumes that he speaks a language used by other people. It is not usual to speak of the language of an individual unless it is something abnormal, such as a mixture of dialects, or unless specimens of the individual’s speech have been recorded for some purpose by a linguist.

(b) We may speak of the language of a considerable number of persons grouped together, because they form a community living together, or a class following the same occupation, a caste, a guild, and the like.

Similarly we may speak of the language of a hamlet, village, town or district, though, as will appear later, closer consideration will often lead to the classification of these as dialects of a wider language.

(c) More commonly one speaks of the language of a much larger group, such as a nation, occupying a larger area—thus one may say the language of Italy is Italian, and of Persia is Persian; or one may speak of the language of Tibet,

the language of the Chinese. Of course some countries, some states, and some nations use more than one language. Local variations may be so great that men from the extremities of the group cannot understand each other.

(d) Much more generally in ordinary conversation and writing a *language* means a *literary* language—that is, a written (and nowadays printed) language with grammars, dictionaries, and, more or less, literature. Such a language is often the official language of some government, and is the national language of a group conscious of its own unity. Having been reduced to definite rules by the adoption of a standard speech and being influenced by the writings of previous generations a literary language becomes a book language, spoken correctly or ‘in its purity’ only by the educated, who generally tend to despise the speech of the ‘vulgar’ or of the ‘provincial’.

As has been indicated already there are many grades of difference between a standard literary language and the ordinary colloquial speech of a country. Widespread literacy tends to reduce the gulf, but even in countries with compulsory education in the standard language the difference is often greater than is generally recognized. If it be asked, ‘Does X speak English?’ the question can be taken in more than one sense, e.g.

- (1) Can X converse and make himself understood in some form of English, though it is not his mother-tongue?
- (2) Does X habitually speak some form of English—however ‘broad’ the dialect?
- (3) Does X speak correct literary English with what is recognized as the standard pronunciation of the educated (in the South of England) free from all dialectal contamination?

Leaving aside for the moment the question as to how the standard pronunciation is fixed, whether by schools, universities, ‘society’, actors or broadcasters—we can see at once that the number of persons who qualify under (3) is vastly less than the number included under (2).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> There was once a great function at a Scottish university attended by Royalty, Ministers of State, and numerous ecclesiastical and academic

The foreigner who learns say French from books, whether at school or by his own efforts, is apt to suppose that all French people habitually talk that same book language, and pronounce it according to that same standard. In fact they do not. It is not merely a matter of local dialects, or of the influence of local pronunciation. The standard of the written language has remained fixed, while that of colloquial speech, even of the educated, has been changing, not only in vocabulary but even in rules of grammar.

This distinction of a literary language from the ordinary speech of the people is of the greatest importance, both in the discussion of linguistic problems and in the appreciation of historical evidence, for usually in the past only the standard literary language was recorded.

(e) We come now to 'a language' as used more technically by the linguist in the study of the history and relationships of different forms of human speech.

Frequently, of course, the linguist can deal only with a written language, because nothing else has been recorded, but at the same time he has always in view the probability that this written language is but a fragmentary record of the spoken language it represents. Sometimes the linguist can find some evidence as to the nature of that spoken language and its variations. Thus, by the Greek language the linguist does not mean merely the language of the Greek grammar and lexicon as taught in schools, or of the texts in standard Attic. He includes not only texts which represent other dialects—like the Homeric poems and Theocritus—but also the inscriptions in numerous local dialects not admitted to literature. In fact he includes not only all the forms of written Greek, but also, as far as he can discover them, all the forms of spoken Greek.

So far this may be said to accord with ordinary usage, as is shown by the term 'Greek' applied to all possible forms of the language, but it remains true that the linguist is more concerned with this universal aspect than the ordinary

dignitaries. Among the visitors who spoke on this occasion was an Indian Maharaja, a very cultivated man. A spectator being asked 'But could he speak English?' replied, 'Speak English: he was the only man that could.'

classical scholar. Moreover, in some languages there has been no general name like Greek of such wide application—e.g. Sanskrit is a name of the standard book language of ancient India and does not apply to less perfect popular speech or to dialects.

Finally we have a similar use of the term 'language' to include a group of dialects, similar in certain respects and differing from other groups of dialects, although there is no literary language in the group to serve as a standard of comparison. To this we shall recur under the head of dialects.

(f) Artificial languages, such as Volapuk, Esperanto, and Ido, have had only a short history and have not yet entered into politics.

#### 4. *Dialects*

The term *dialect* is commonly used in two ways.

(a) Dialect is distinguished from a standard literary language. Writers sometimes mention local peculiarities of speech, among the people, as they might mention peculiarities of costume, folklore, or custom. Then dramatists occasionally make some of their minor characters speak in 'dialect'. Thus on the English stage a Scotsman has often been represented as speaking a Scottish dialect. In reality of course this stage Scotch is not identical with any dialect spoken in Scotland, for if it were, an English audience would not understand it.

Finally, from the literary point of view, there is dialect literature, generally poetry. If this is written by men who are acquainted with the standard language it is apt to be influenced by this. Moreover, if the dialect has not been standardized by a literary tradition a poet is apt to use words and phrases belonging to different localities. Thus the language used in the poems of Robert Burns is not identical with the local speech of any particular district in Scotland, and that is doubtless one of the reasons why his poems are so widely popular. A great deal of his language is ordinary English, and the Scottish elements, both vocabulary and grammar, are mixed.

If a poet keeps close to the actual speech of his own home he appeals to a more limited circle of readers.

Ancient Greece was divided up into small city states and attained to a high level of literary development long before any kind of political unity and before the general use of a common language. When Athens took the lead and Attic was cultivated more than any other form of Greek—being the language of Plato and Aristotle, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, Demosthenes, Xenophon, Thucydides—there were already important works in other dialects, including the Homeric poems.

In Germany the standard language has come to be a form of High German, that is, a type of German spoken in the highlands towards the south of Germany, which came first into contact with the culture of south Europe, but now spoken with the pronunciation of north Germany, which dominated the political development of united Germany. There is a small amount of literature in Low German (*Platt Deutsch*), which is regarded in Germany as 'dialect'. In the Netherlands a very similar form of Low German has developed into a standard literary language, while the speech of the Friesian islanders, which is closer to English, is regarded as 'dialect'.

There is a tendency to regard these literary dialects as variations and even as corruptions of a standard literary language. In general this is not true. Low German has not developed out of High German. The dialects used by Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, and Theocritus are not varieties of Attic. The Scottish dialects and the dialect of Devonshire are not derived from the literary English based on the speech of the Midlands, which was focused in London and has become 'correct' English.

All these dialects have their independent roots in the past. When, however, a standard literary language has established itself over a particular area, any subsequent effort to write dialect is apt to be profoundly influenced by the dominant language, or else to become artificial in a conscious effort to avoid that influence.

In Ancient India a distinction was drawn between the 'perfected' literary language Sanskrit and the 'natural' language Prakrit. In the course of time, however, some of the Prakrits developed literatures, dominated more and

more by Sanskrit, the language of orthodox religion, law, and the greatest poets. Then the grammarians developed rules for turning Sanskrit into Prakrit, and the independent roots in any Prakrit became obscured and generally ignored. In other words, the Prakrits have come to be regarded as dialects of Sanskrit, but the original Prakrits, like those used by the first Buddhists and Jains, were nothing of the kind. Sanskrit has been based on the speech of the Midland (*Madhyadesa*, round about the Ambala District and Delhi) which was only one of the dialects of the invading Aryans.

(b) This brings us to the other use of the term 'dialect', namely, varieties of speech obviously similar and related, not differing from each other sufficiently to be called separate languages but not regarded as forms of a particular literary language. If we find a group of dialects none of which have developed a literature, and none of which is used more widely than another, and if further we know nothing of their history or of any older form of any of them, we have no temptation to regard them as the dialects *of* any one of the group or *of* anything else but the group taken as a whole.

Linguists use the terms 'language' and 'dialect' as steps in the *classification* of masses of varying but similar speech. Thus, in classifying the Indo-Aryan dialects it has been convenient to group together a number of dialects in Bihar, which resemble each other and differ from Bengali on one side and from Hindi on the other, as a *language* 'Bihari', although there is no literary language of that name, and the name was not known before the Linguistic Survey of India. Similarly dialects of Rajputana have been grouped together as Rajasthani, whereas ordinary Indian usage regarded both the Bihari and the Rajasthani dialects as forms of Hindi. 'Hindi' had been cultivated in three or four distinct forms—Braj Bhakha, Eastern Hindi, Urdu---but the linguists have divided it into two languages, Western Hindi and Eastern Hindi. So also the student of Romance dialects in Europe groups them under several 'languages' that are not familiar to the layman, who thinks only of literary and national languages, like French, Italian, Romanian, Spanish, and Portuguese.



The Provençal dialects in the south of France, Walloon in Belgium, Ladin in Switzerland, Catalan in Spain, and the dialects of Sardinia are not dialects of those national languages, though they are related to them. When we consider the immense amount of variation that exists in spoken speech, especially in areas where there is no widespread use of a standard form of the local language, it becomes clear that the linguist must often make an arbitrary decision as to how many distinct dialects he will recognize. If the speech of a particular valley or town has only one or two peculiarities which distinguish it from the surrounding dialect, the linguist will often assign to that valley or town a 'sub-dialect' or a 'variety' rather than a whole 'dialect' to itself. In this matter the linguist is often guided by popular usage. If the people themselves have assigned a separate name to the speech of a particular area, the linguist often accepts that as evidence of a consciousness of difference that may be accepted and adopts the name as of a distinct dialect. In other cases the linguist finds it necessary to disregard popular usage in view of evidence of historical development.

When dialects are mixed, it is sometimes difficult to determine which is the basis of the local speech and which has been borrowed.

Detailed examination also shows that it is sometimes difficult to draw a definite line on the map dividing two dialects. One can draw a line showing the boundary between two sounds (*isophone*), between two words (*isogloss*), or between two grammatical forms (*isomorph*). If all these lines coincide (as they may do along the bank of a wide river or in a precipitous mountain valley) it is easy to draw our definite line; but if the various *isophones*, &c., diverge, we can only divide our dialects with a blurred line or else admit that our boundary line is only approximate.

### 5. *Classification of Languages*

This brings us to the wider question of the classification of languages.

In India there is a proverbial saying to the effect that the speech changes every few miles,

Once we leave the dictionary and grammar to observe the actual speech of the people in their homes we find that every language has a large number of local variations.

In a country where education is universal, so that every child must go to school and learn to read a standard literary language, the local dialects tend to gradually disappear. Local idioms, words, and sounds are laughed at as uneducated and 'vulgar' and each generation approaches nearer to the common standard. Nevertheless, the English, for example, spoken in Devonshire remains different from the English spoken in Northumberland: not only in the mouths of villagers, but also in a lesser degree as between gentilefolk.

A French patois spoken in the north of France differs greatly from a dialect spoken in the south: a village speech in the north-west of Italy from the dialect of Sicily.

When we compare French and Italian in the ordinary way, we are speaking of two standard literary languages: that is, historically, of the cultivated developed language of Paris on one side and of Tuscany (with the pronunciation of Rome) on the other. The village dialects on both sides of the political frontier, in the south-east of France and the north-west of Italy, resemble each other more closely than do standard French and Italian.

Passing from village to village, whether in India or in Europe, the careful observer may detect differences of dialect in the course of a day's march—but on some days he may notice a much more marked change than on others. This will occur on a day when he happens to cross a linguistic boundary, either between two distinct dialects of one language, or between two languages. This latter change will be more striking even though the two languages are closely related. The change will be still more violent when the two languages are more distantly related, as in passing from a French dialect to a German dialect, from English to Welsh, from German to Polish, from Persian to Pashtu.

And finally there may be a day when the traveller crosses a boundary between two languages that are not related at all; as from French to Basque, from German to Hungarian,

from Greek to Turkish, from Sinhalese to Tamil, or from Marathi to Kanarese.

In speaking of such boundaries we have assumed that it is known whether or no the languages are related and in what degree. Actually these relationships have been determined by the study of their resemblances and differences: by measuring as it were the depth of the boundary ditches.

The first rough test of relationship is mutual intelligibility. Every one is familiar with some local variations in his mother tongue. Some peculiarity of pronunciation, local word or phrase, often reveals the district, even the town, where a man learned to talk. Slight peculiarities of this kind do not prevent us from understanding what a man is saying. We may consider his speech rather 'rough', 'broad', 'vulgar', even 'comic', but we do not regard it as another language. If the differences are very marked and it is difficult to follow everything the man says, though most of it is intelligible, we shall probably say he is speaking a dialect of our language. When, however, the differences are so numerous that we can only catch a word here and there and quite miss the drift of what a man is saying, we may be in doubt whether he is speaking a dialect of our language or some other somewhat similar language. This doubt may remain longer with a traveller who has observed a chain of related dialects of which the two ends are not mutually intelligible. This state of affairs is clearer when speakers from the two ends of the chain do not possess any knowledge of a common literary language with which to eke out their vernacular when this is not understood.

If a man should travel on foot from Lahore to Calcutta, passing slowly from village to village, and conversing freely with the people in each village, it would be possible for him, if he travelled slowly enough, to arrive in Bengal able to understand village Bengali without his being able to say when and where he first heard the language. If he fixed on any particular village, it would doubtless be the first village where he found a school teaching the Bengali script. If such a traveller were asked how many languages he had traversed, he would probably reply that he had passed from Panjabi

through Hindi to Bengali, whereas the Linguistic Survey of India distinguishes three languages between Panjabi and Bengali, viz. Western Hindi, Eastern Hindi, and Bihari.

The linguist is not satisfied with these rough tests of relationship, obvious similarity and mutual intelligibility, either of two dialects or of a chain of dialects. His comparison of languages must be based on a closer and more systematic examination than that of the observant traveller. Actually the comparative study of languages with a view to their classification started with literary languages, and the methods evolved were afterwards applied to spoken dialects.

#### 6. *Methods of Comparison—Vocabulary*

The first obvious method of comparing a number of languages (which are not mutually intelligible) is to compare their vocabularies—i.e. the words they use for a series of simple ideas and objects, such as numbers, parts of the body, relations in the family, and so on.

The following examples may serve to illustrate similarities in related languages and, as will be suggested later, the differences due to phonetic change. Other words illustrate different forms of unrelated languages.

English <i>father</i> .	Dutch <i>vader</i> .	Danish <i>fader</i> .
German <i>vater</i> .	French <i>père</i> .	
Spanish <i>padre</i> .	Latin <i>pater</i> .	
Greek <i>patēr</i> .	Persian <i>pidar</i> .	
Sanskrit <i>pitā</i> .	Panjabi <i>piu</i> .	Armenian <i>hayr</i> .
Urdu <i>bāp</i> .	Russian <i>otets</i> (pron. <i>atyéts</i> ).	

#### 7. *Defects of Comparison based on Vocabulary*

A comparison of this kind reveals many points of similarity between languages that are not obviously alike and serves to suggest degrees of relationship between closely related languages. The more words they have in common and the less the differences of pronunciation, the more closely related two languages may be assumed to be. This method, however, by itself has serious drawbacks.

(a) We may be comparing the wrong words. English *dog* has no relation to Hindi *kuttā*, but English *hound* is related

to Sanskrit *śvān*—*śun*—compare Latin *canis* (French *chien*), Greek *κύων*, *κυν*-. French *cheval* 'horse', Italian *cavallo* have no kinship with the Indian *ghoṛā*, but Latin *equus* is related to Sanskrit *aśvaḥ*, Persian *asb*—(*saw-ār*, a rider).

(b) Two very similar words may have diverse histories, so that the resemblance is only accidental. We must always be on the look-out for coincidences, especially when there seem to be a small number of identities of words found in languages situated far apart, with no connecting links. For example, we shall hesitate to identify English *soup* and Sanskrit *sūpa* (in this instance we have good reason for the hesitation, as in other words Sanskrit *p* is represented by English *f*); English *bad* and Persian *bad*.

(c) Phonetic changes may make it difficult to recognize related words, until the phonetic laws or tendencies have been traced. English *head* is not obviously like Latin *caput*, French *chef*. (For a physical head French uses a nickname *tête* from Latin *testa*, a pot.) English *father* does not look like the same word as Armenian *hayr*.

(d) A similar word may have been borrowed by one or both languages.

English has borrowed enormously from French (from more than one dialect) and since then has notoriously borrowed words all over the world. Wherever two languages have come into close contact in any area, more or less borrowing has always taken place.

*Tobacco*, *tabák*, *tambáku*, &c., is a widely spread word originally derived, like *potato*, from the West Indies.

Urdu *chai* is the same word as *tea*, but both are derived from China.

The borrowing of a few isolated words will not affect the question of classification. Sometimes, however, when two languages are used in the same country many hundreds of words are borrowed from the language of the people which is for the time being politically or culturally dominant.

In England for some two centuries after the Norman Conquest the dominant official language was Norman-French. In the thirteenth century English began to assert itself, but by this time hundreds of French words had been adopted and

the new literary language which developed was profoundly influenced by French and very different from the Old English of King Alfred's day. Subsequently the literary and cultural influence of France added many more French words to the English vocabulary. Then the revival of letters brought in a wealth of Latin words. The result is that a large part of the vocabulary of the English language is not Germanic but borrowed from the Latin group of languages.

Similarly, in Persia, for some centuries after the Arabic invasion and the introduction of Islam, Arabic was the dominant political and literary language. Towards the end of the tenth century, when the native language began to return to favour, it had already borrowed hundreds of Arabic words and had adopted the Arabic script. The subsequent development was strongly influenced by Arabic, the classical language of Islam. The consequence is that Persian has a very large Arabic element in its vocabulary and even uses Arabic phrases and fragments of Arabic grammar. Indeed, many people imagine that Persian is more akin to Arabic than it is to Sanskrit. This impression is partly due to the use of the same script, partly due to the fact that Arabic and Persian have both become Islamic languages, and partly due to geographical contiguity. If by kinship we mean not superficial similarity in some respects, but relationship by descent, then Persian is to be classified as a near cousin of Sanskrit, not related to Arabic at all.

#### 8. *Comparison of Vocabulary Inadequate*

The method of comparing vocabularies is in fact quite inadequate for the determination of relationships of languages. It is somewhat like classifying flowers by their colour, size, and obvious shape. The botanist tells us that those particulars are most misleading and that a scientific classification must be based on *structure*, which it may need a microscope to detect. In the same way the linguist tells us that a scientific classification of languages must be based on the minute study of their *structure*. The structure of a language includes its phonetic system, its grammar, and its method of forming new words. The phonetic system includes

the character of the sounds used, the changes to which they are liable in particular circumstances, and the nature of the accent. Grammar means not only declensions and conjugations, but also all methods of expressing various relations and modifications of meaning, including word-order, syntax, and the formation of words.

In the nineteenth century the term 'comparative grammar' was largely used for the comparative study of languages. If this phrase is less common nowadays, it is not because the comparative study of all that can be included under grammar is regarded as less essential, but rather because modern linguists have concerned themselves with all aspects of language, and especially with detailed studies of phonetics, the history of vocabularies, and the connexion of linguistic phenomena with the development of civilization and the cultural history of peoples.

It has long been recognized that phonetic change may obscure the original formation of a word—thus, to compare two words from different languages meaning the same thing we have first to *analyse* them into their component elements. This can be done more easily when we have an older language of the same group to suggest what the older forms may have been. For a large group of languages, including English, Latin, and Greek, this service has been rendered by Sanskrit, which is ancient and which also has kept the processes of building up words fairly clear. Comparison with Sanskrit often enables us to recognize the different elements in a Greek or Latin word which otherwise would be difficult to detect. Indeed, it was the revelation of Sanskrit to Europe that formed the starting-point of modern linguistics.

To that was added the idea of change and development which has been emphasized in modern times by the biological sciences. A student who forms his ideas about language on the basis of a classical literature, like that in Latin, Sanskrit, or Arabic, may easily suppose that such a language is eternal: that it has remained the same through all ages and that it can never change. A literary language of which the grammar and spelling have been fixed by definite rules can remain unchanged for a very long time. If masters of

rhetoric and poetics regulate style and forms of composition and if vocabulary becomes conventional, the literary language becomes still more conservative, and it may become impossible to date a particular work even approximately to within a century or two.

On the other hand it is clear that the pronunciation of a classical language does change. Where we find three or four ways of pronouncing a classical language it is obvious that they cannot all be correct, i.e. the ancient way. Again, whereas every one will agree that the classical language was originally the same as, or very like, or based upon, an everyday spoken language, the speech of the same country or of the same people is now very different. Further, there are often younger languages admitted to be descended from the classical language (or from the spoken language contemporary with it) as Italian, Spanish, and French are descended from Latin, as Bengali, Marathi, and Hindi are descended from the ancient Indo-Aryan language of which Sanskrit is the literary 'perfection'.

Lastly, when we compare the oldest records of Latin and Sanskrit with later works we perceive that they are not merely peculiar for some mystic or mysterious reason, but are actually older in form, because the language was still changing and had not yet been fixed or crystallized into the form that was to resist all change for centuries.

Once we have admitted the idea of change in the history of a classical language, we can carry it farther back. The structure of Latin resembles the structure of Greek because they have both *grown* from a common source or ancestor.

### 9. *Family of Languages*

This brings us to the conception of a Family of Languages. When several languages not only have many words in common (in somewhat different forms) but also agree in general structure, they are said to belong to the same *family*. This word contains a metaphor and implies that all the members of the family have a common ancestor or have developed out of a common source. We have already spoken of the Romance languages—French, Italian, &c.—derived from



Latin, and of the modern languages of North India derived from Sanskrit, or at least from the spoken languages on which these classical languages were based.

It is a farther step to conceive of a common source from which Latin and Sanskrit were derived. Yet we can deduce a large number of particulars regarding the theoretical common language 'Indo-European' from which these and many other languages, including English, have descended.

When a number of languages resemble each other but have no ancient form of any of them recorded, it is much more difficult to reconstruct the ancient form of words. If we had only Italian, Spanish, and French we might approximate to the Latin forms but we could not reconstruct Latin. The comparison of a dozen languages in Africa or Oceania may show a large number of similarities. On the basis of this comparison we may assume that there was a common ancestor, and so place them in the same family. In the absence of older records we cannot know what these languages were like a few centuries ago, and we can only conjecture very vaguely the character of the common ancestor.

Again, when it is a question of excluding a group of languages from a particular family, it is obviously much harder to be certain, when the known history of the languages only goes back a few centuries or even generations.

Are the Maori dialects of New Zealand related to the Munda dialects found in India? Unless there are quite a large number of similarities in vocabulary and structure the linguist will put these two groups in separate 'families'. But of course the negative is not proved. We can have only a vague idea as to how the ancestors of the Maoris and of the Santhals talked a thousand years ago.

As it is impossible to *prove* that any two languages are not ultimately related (if one could only go back far enough), and as there has been a tendency to assume that human language must have started at a single centre (which is by no means certain), some scholars have been attracted to the problem of tracing resemblances between very different languages, and attempting to derive different 'families' from a common source. If such speculations contain any truth

it generally seems incapable of proof. If, for example, the Indo-European family, Sanskrit, &c., is ultimately related to the Semitic family, Arabic, &c., the point of separation is so remote that all trace of it has been lost; it would lie back in a linguistic stratum too ancient for us to know anything about it.

### 10. *Morphological Classification*

Mention may be made of a more general classification of languages according to the type of their structure. Languages are said to be agglutinative, inflectional, isolating, or polysynthetic.

(a) In Chinese each word is a monosyllable, which cannot be analysed into more than one element. So there is no distinction between a radical or chief significant element and formative or modifying elements.

There is, for instance, a word written 目 *mu* which means 'eye, to regard, chief, important'. This word is pronounced differently in different parts of China, e.g. *muk*, *mung*, *mok*, but there are no modifications of *mu* or *muk* expressing modifications of the meaning such as 'eyes, eyed, regardless, regarding, importance', &c. We do not find groups of words containing a common element and related in meaning. The sound *mu* which means 'eye', &c., is also attached to other characters meaning 'wood, wash, ducks, lucern, solemn, die, summon, curtain, love, evening'—and pronounced with a different tone the same syllable means 'copy, mother, thumb', &c. Similarly *min* has many meanings—'people', &c., and so has *ming*—'name'; &c., but the *min* series has no more connexion with the *ming* series than English *sin* with *sing*, nor are there any modified words in Chinese corresponding to *sinning*, *sinner*, *sang*, &c.

It is true that certain words are used (somewhat like our prepositions) to express what we are accustomed to call grammatical relations by a modification or weakening of their original meaning. In *mu chih tzü*, 'mother's son', *chih* is written as a separate word. It has various meanings such as 'go, he, that, zigzag, belonging to'. In the phrase *mu chih tzü* its meaning is practically the same as that of the 'apostrophe s' in 'mother's'. Nevertheless it is not a formative element of a single word *mu-chih*.

The same is true of other words used (especially in modern colloquial Chinese) to express such modifications as plurality, past and present tense.

Chinese is the classical example of an *Isolating or Monosyllabic* language. It was at one time regarded as being of the most archaic type extant and it was supposed that human language started with isolated monosyllables. Further research has proved that Chinese originally possessed words of two and even three syllables. The present condition of Chinese is the result of phonetic decay during several thousand years. Moreover, it seems more probable that human speech began with a mass of semi-articulate sounds rather than with a number of distinct monosyllables.

(b) In Turkish the distinction between root and formative element is clearly marked. The root can be easily picked out and the formative elements remain distinct both from the root and from each other. The formative elements occur in many combinations, retaining their distinct form and only liable to a modification of the vowel in harmony with the vowel of the root; thus:

<i>ev</i>	'house'	<i>ev-im</i>	'my house'
<i>arслан</i>	'lion'	<i>arслан-am</i>	'my lion'

#### EXAMPLES OF TURKISH WORD-STRUCTURE

<i>ev</i>	house	<i>ev-ler</i>	houses
<i>ev-im</i>	my house	<i>ev-ler-im</i>	my houses
<i>ev-im-iñ</i>	of my house	<i>ev-ler-im-iñ</i>	of my houses
<i>ev-iñ</i>	your house	<i>evleriñ</i>	your houses
<i>ev-iñ-iñ</i>	of your house	<i>evleriñ-iñ</i>	of your houses
<i>evimiz</i>	our house	<i>evlerinden</i>	from your houses
<i>sev</i>	love (thou)	<i>severim</i>	I love
<i>sevsün</i>	let him love	<i>severaidim</i>	I used to love
<i>sevsunler</i>	let them love	<i>sevdim</i>	I have loved
<i>sevmishler</i>	those who have loved	<i>sevmishim</i>	I had loved
		<i>seversem</i>	if I love
<i>sevilerler</i>	they are loved	<i>sevahbileraidim</i>	I used to be able to love
<i>sevilerim</i>	I am loved	<i>sevdirahbileraidim</i>	I used to be able to cause to love

This type of language is called *Agglutinative* because the formative elements are, as it were, *glued* on to the root, but not merged in it. Turkish is a particularly clear example of this type.

(c) In Sanskrit we find groups of words possessing some common radical element with various prefixes and suffixes that modify the meaning, but we are frequently unable to separate the different elements and assign a definite meaning to each. It is as if the separate parts had become fused together in the single word, so that even the radical element is modified.

## EXAMPLES

From the 'root'	<i>nī</i> 'to lead'
	<i>nayati</i> he leads
	<i>nīnāya</i> he led (Reduplicated Perfect)
	<i>nīnyuh</i> they led (Reduplicated Perfect)
	<i>nīnetha</i> thou didst lead (Reduplicated Perfect)
	fect)
From the 'root'	<i>vac</i> 'to speak'
	<i>vakti</i> he speaks
	<i>uvāca</i> he spoke (Reduplicated Perfect)
	<i>uraktha</i> thou didst speak (Reduplicated Perfect)
	fect)
	<i>ūcuḥ</i> they spoke (Reduplicated Perfect)
From the 'root'	<i>kṛ</i> 'to do, make'
	<i>karoti</i> he makes
	<i>cakāra</i> he made (Reduplicated Perfect)
	<i>cakartha</i> thou didst make (Reduplicated Perfect)
	fect)
	<i>cakruḥ</i> they made (Reduplicated Perfect)
	<i>cakrāvāṃsam</i> acc. sing. masc. of Active Perfect
	participle
	<i>akārṣīt</i> he made, s-Aorist
	<i>akar</i> he made, root Aorist.

We may analyse these examples into their elements, e.g.:

*nī* 'gunated' *ne* = *nay*.

*nay* + ('thematic') *a* = *naya*.

*naya* + *ti* (3rd sing. primary) = *nayati*.

*nī* reduplicated — *nīnī* with 'vrddhi'.

*nīnai* — *nīnāy*; *nīnāy* + *a* = *nīnāya*.

*vac* reduplicated is *va-vac*;

*va* is weakened to *u* so *va-vac* becomes *u-uc* = *ūc*, add *uḥ* (3rd pl. ending in Perf. Act.) and we have *ūcuḥ*.

Such analysis is not so obvious as in the Turkish examples, nor can so definite a part of the meaning be assigned to each element. This type of language is called *Inflectional*. By means of *inflections* are formed the declensions of nouns, adjectives, and pronouns, and the conjugations of the verbs. Other famous examples of this type are Greek and Latin, where the detailed analysis is more difficult than in Sanskrit, and also Arabic and Hebrew.

(d) Inflective languages are each more or less *synthetic* or *analytic*. Synthetic (putting together) is applied to languages in which one word can give a complex meaning which in an analytic language is split up among a number of words.

#### EXAMPLES

Sanskrit.	<i>abhaviṣyat</i>	∴ he would have been
	<i>agnīnām</i>	— of (the) fires
	<i>cakṛadbhiḥ</i>	· with or by those who have or had made
	<i>mimāraṣiṣu</i>	· · among those who desire to kill
Latin.	<i>moriturus</i>	= being about to die
	<i>amabimus</i>	= we shall love.

Sanskrit, like Latin and Greek, is a very synthetic language; English is very analytic.

In English very few inflections survive. There are more in French and German and many more in Russian and modern Greek.

It is possible to write a simple style of monosyllabic English, which apart from plurals of nouns, third person singular, and the past tense and participle of verbs might be classified with Chinese as a monosyllabic isolating language, though it has arrived at a similar stage by a different route.

#### EXAMPLE

‘In this tongue not much change is made for case or mood, for such can be shown by the use of two or more words; so that the speech of a child, who does not use long words, is in some ways like that used by tribes in the Far East.’

(e) Peculiar to America is a large group of languages that pack so much into a single word (not a compound of separate words) that they have been labelled *polysynthetic*.

This morphological classification is not of much practical importance, because it provides only a small number of divisions for many hundreds of languages, and because it is impossible to draw hard and fast lines between these classes. The same language may have isolating, agglutinative, and inflective features. Few languages are consistently only one or the other.

The distinction between synthetic and analytic is clearly a matter of more or less.

### 11. *Mechanism of Speech*

For the purposes of this book it is not necessary to describe the functions of the vocal organs or to enumerate the various speech-sounds or *phonemes* that are used in the languages of the world. Still it may be useful to say something of the physical vehicle of speech and of the phenomenon of phonetic change.

The physical basis of spoken speech consists in vibrations of the air caused by the vocal organs and received by the organ of hearing.

Variations in the action of the organs of speech produce variations in the medium (air) and so in the ear of the hearer. This is a physical process.

The variations in the surface of a gramophone record, acting through a needle, &c., cause the surrounding air to vibrate in a certain way; these vibrations of the air can be recorded by a phonograph—but the gramophone does not *speak*, neither does the phonograph *hear*. A *speaker* and a *hearer* must exercise mental functions, which no machine can do. The psychological basis of speech may be considered under two heads:

- (i) the psychological processes which lead a speaker to utter particular sounds, and those by which the hearer perceives those sounds.
- (ii) the ideas which the speaker intends to convey, and which the hearer understands him to mean.

Talking is a habit and like other habits can become almost 'mechanical'. When a man is talking naturally his own language, or a language he knows very well, he is not as a rule conscious of any effort, mental or muscular; nor does he pay much attention to the *sound* of his speech, being mainly concerned with its *meaning*. He will occasionally pronounce words wrongly without noticing the mistake. Sometimes the mistake is noticed and corrected at once by the speaker. Other mistakes—like stammering—due to a wrong use of the vocal organs are liable to recur constantly unless corrected by careful training. The occasional slip is due to carelessness, that is, inattention not merely to the sound which has just been produced, but also to the sound that is *just going to be produced*.

If one intends to use a word that is somewhat unfamiliar, or to speak in a foreign language, one pays more attention to the sound both before and after utterance. Every one has stored up in his memory a series of sound-records of all the words and phrases he is in the habit of using when he speaks. As he can shut his eyes and visualize the form of the written (or printed) symbol of a word, so can he call up a presentation of the sound of the word without moving his vocal organs.<sup>1</sup> This mental picture or record of a sound or *phoneme* forms its most permanent aspect in the history of an individual speaker, and is unaffected by many minute and accidental variations.

Hearing is also a habit and the process may be described as the inverse of talking. In talking we have: (a) the consciousness of the meaning to be expressed; (b) the finding of the appropriate sound-records; (c) the production of corresponding sounds.

In hearing we have: (a) the striking of the sounds on the drum of the ear; (b) the recognition of these sounds as corresponding to certain sound-records; (c) the understanding of the meaning intended.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> One may observe a distinct tendency for the vocal organs to produce, or to some degree follow out, the motions necessary to produce the sound corresponding to the mental record called up in the mind. Some people always move their lips and tongue when reading, and often when thinking.

<sup>2</sup> This is not intended to be a complete psychological analysis, but emphasizes what is important for practical purposes.

The second stage of this process of hearing—hearing the sounds a man utters—requires more practice than is ordinarily realized. It is clearly shown in a person's efforts to learn an unfamiliar language. One of the great difficulties is not in reproducing the sounds one hears the teacher utter, though that often requires much practice, but in hearing what sounds the teacher is uttering. By following the directions of the teacher, the pupil may happen on a passable pronunciation of an unfamiliar sound, but unless he has the faculty of forming a sound-record from a few impressions, the pupil soon relapses into the old incorrect pronunciation and appears to be unconscious of his lapse.

The experimental phonetician examines in great detail actual sounds spoken by individuals. By means of a series of ingenious devices he measures rate of vibration, duration of sounds, nasal reverberance, position of the tongue and so on. He may be said to put speech under the microscope.

If we look into these microscopic records we cannot fail to be struck by two facts. One is the way individual sounds slide into each other in a word or sentence. Reading and writing often gives us the impression that speech consists of definitely distinct units of sound that follow each other like printed letters and that the sound corresponding to a particular letter is always the same.

The microscopic record shows us rather a stream of sound (with some short silences) in which we can detect individual sounds, but the actual character of a particular sound often varies according to its position in a word or phrase.

The other striking fact is the infinite variation in the actual sounds produced not merely by the speakers of different dialects, or different local variations of the same dialect, but also by men and women speaking the same dialect, nay, even by the same speaker at different ages, in different conditions of health, and in the different moods that affect the pace and emphasis of his utterance.

Now a great deal of this minute variation is practically inaudible. Some aspects like the timbre of the voice, it is recognized, do not affect the meaning and are automatically ignored. Nevertheless, there remains a large amount of



variation in actual pronunciation. This forms the ground-work of phonetic change.

### 12. *Phonetic Change*

Phonetic change comprises (a) the substitution of a particular sound,<sup>1</sup> say English *Z* for another sound, say *S*, in the same language in particular circumstances: so *cat* has plural *cats*, but the plural of *dog* is *dogz*; and (b) the change of a particular sound into something else whenever it occurs: thus the old sound *c* in Old English *cirice* has been replaced by the composite sound represented by *ch* in *church*, while in the Scottish *kirk* it has been replaced by *k*.

Particular phonetic changes are explained as due to the influence of neighbouring sounds, to the accent and so on.

The general tendencies that remove certain sounds, replace *p* by *b* or *f*, *r* by *l*, *s* by *h*, or one vowel by another are more difficult if not impossible to account for.

Some changes may be due to contact with speakers of other languages, some may be associated with subtle physical changes due to climate or way of life. Others may be due to increased speed of thought and speech in large towns, to deliberate softening in refined societies, and to economy of effort in dealing with well-established phrases.

Whatever may be the ultimate cause the fact of perpetual change, though it be too slow to be perceptible in one lifetime, is undoubted. A fixed spelling may conceal the changes for some generations—a universal system of education may retard the process and restore archaic pronunciations. Change may be more rapid in one area than in another, and more rapid at one period than another. Nevertheless, the process is always at work, and the accumulated changes of a few centuries make a noticeable difference. When we add to these the changes due to the formation of new words, the dropping of old ones, and changes due to analogy, the total difference is still more striking. It has been said that in some parts of Africa dialects change so rapidly that a man who leaves his village for twenty years can hardly understand

<sup>1</sup> More exactly 'of a particular *phoneme* or sound-type'.

his relations on his return. This is perhaps an exaggeration, but points to very rapid changes of vocabulary.

If we could hear Shakespeare reciting his own poetry, we should probably think he was speaking a Scottish dialect, and if we could sit with him in an Elizabethan tavern, we should have difficulty in following the conversation. The farther back we went, the greater difficulty we should feel. If we could call up the spirit of King Alfred to speak as he used to speak, it would sound to us like Dutch, somewhat familiar, but impossible to understand.

The man who claims to speak the same language as his remote ancestors is always under a delusion—they would not understand him. A literary tradition may continue for many centuries and so may certain features of structure, but everything else is always changing.

## CHAPTER III

### LANGUAGES AT THE DAWN OF HISTORY

#### 1. *Earliest Languages*

WE can say nothing of human speech, except by way of speculation, in the earliest periods to which archaeology has assigned human remains and the traces of human life. Until man had invented a system of *writing* he could leave no record of his speech. Writing began with pictures and significant marks. But pictures by themselves, even if they suggest a meaning, can tell us nothing of the language of the painter. Marks like a cross, circle, or triangle are meaningless without a clue. To tell us anything of the language represented, picture writing must have particular pictures for individual words, and decipherment is impossible unless there are *phonetic* pictures or signs, i.e. signs for individual syllables and sounds apart from their meaning. Even so we may remain in the dark as to the nature of those sounds, unless we can somehow link them up with a later form of the same language or with some other language about which we have some information.

By the comparison of a number of similar languages we may determine the general character of the hypothetical common language from which they are derived—but it is impossible to carry this process back for many centuries beyond our oldest records. Again such inductive reconstruction tells us little of the speakers of the hypothetical mother tongue, who they were, and where they lived.

#### 2. *Writing*

Writing, with its mechanical developments, typing, printing, &c., has become such an essential part of modern life that it is difficult to imagine the laborious stages by which systems of writing were invented. In modern times new alphabets have been invented by individuals, e.g. the Morse code of dots and dashes for telegraphy and signalling, the Braille system of raised dots for the blind, and the shorthand

systems of Pitman, Gregg, &c.<sup>1</sup> All these are systems of equivalents for an existing alphabet. Very different was the position of scribes before the idea of an alphabet had emerged. There was the message to be recorded, there was the stream of sounds, nay, even the stream of 'wingéd words', but how were they to be recorded so that they might survive the speaker or be sent farther than one could trust the memory of a messenger? How could they be reduced to drawings with the brush or pen? At first the notion of doing this must have seemed as difficult as it would be for any person untrained in music to write down a tune. In the course of time musicians have evolved systems of musical notation based either on alphabetic names of notes or on marks and lines representing the keys of a keyed instrument. That presupposes an analysis of the rise and fall of the singing voice into definite intervals or notes, and finding convenient means of recording them.

In somewhat the same way an alphabet presupposes some analysis of the sounds in a word or sentence, and the finding of convenient signs for the separate sounds.

In the earliest writings which it has been possible to decipher there are two elements: *ideograms*, pictures, or groups of lines derived from pictures, to represent ideas; and *phonograms*, pictures used to represent more or less the sound of the commonest word expressing the idea of a picture, and later lines or marks associated with a particular sound. Such is the stage represented by the hieroglyphics of Egypt, the early cuneiform of Mesopotamia, and Chinese writing.

A later development is a *syllabary*. This is a system of separate signs for each syllable. So in the Japanese syllabary there are distinct signs for *ma*, *mi*, *mu* and for *ka*, *ki*, *ku*, without any similarity between *ma*, *mi*, *mu* or between *mu* and *ku*. This system is only suitable for a language which has a limited range of possible syllables.

Eventually any serious thought about the sounds of language must reveal the common element in *ma*, *mi*, *mu* and (though this is not so obvious) in *ka*, *ki*, *ku*.

On this observation of the common consonant were based

<sup>1</sup> These shorthand systems are phonetic in the sense that they are consistent, but they make no new analysis of sounds.

the consonantal alphabets used by Semitic scribes and by the Egyptians. Arabic and Hebrew devised ways of marking the vowels afterwards by 'points' or special signs.

The earliest Indian alphabets that have been read have adopted letters for the vowels at the beginning of a word, but other vowels are shown with little signs attached to the consonants. Thus the unit of Indian writing was the syllable and not the letter.

The first true *alphabet* was invented by the Greeks on the basis of a Semitic consonantal alphabet, Phoenician. The Greeks used some of the Semitic consonants as vowels which they wrote not only at the beginning of words but wherever they occurred. This was one of the great triumphs of the human intellect.

Previously men had said, 'You can have *ka*, *ki*, *ke*, *ko*, &c., and *ak*, *ik*, *ek*, *ok*, but you cannot have *k* by itself. You cannot pronounce it, you cannot read it; the symbol would be meaningless'. The Greeks wrote *K* meaning not *ka*, or *ak* but simply the *K* element in the *ka*, *ki*, *ku* syllables and wrote the full vowel-signs after it, *KA*, *KE*, *KO*, &c. The importance of that step forward cannot be exaggerated. It was due to the Greek genius for clear analysis singularly unfettered by superstition.

Traditional scribes, impressed by the magic power of the written word, would naturally hesitate to write a symbol that had neither meaning nor a sound one could pronounce.

Once an alphabet has been invented and is found capable of recording language the older pictorial systems appear to be very cumbrous.

It should be remembered that those old systems were stepping-stones of human progress, and it is not very difficult to sympathize with the leisurely conservatism of the ancient scribe, who had ample time for the intricacies of his craft to which his life was devoted.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To be able to read and write one's own language is now considered the minimum of literacy to be expected of every citizen of a really modern state. When writing began, just this constituted the full qualification of a special profession. For a very long time the knowledge was confined to special classes--and the idea that a man who can read and write should not be expected to do anything else survives in many countries.

### 3. *Egyptian*

The oldest writings that we have were produced by civilization developing on water-ways, especially in the valleys of great rivers—the Nile, the Tigris and Euphrates, the Indus, and the Yangtze-Kiang. It has been thought that the periodical flooding of these flat valleys made agriculture easy and gave mankind some leisure in the struggle for existence. The position of the valleys gave them some immunity from predatory raids. The facility of communication by water promoted exchange of commodities and made more possible the control which was necessary in order to get full value from the irrigation system.

Under these conditions large populations grew up, with more division of labour and greater luxury for the controllers—priests, kings, and scribes—and greater wealth for the merchants, than was possible in smaller settlements.

At any rate much of this is true of Egypt, and here we find one of the oldest systems of writing and consequently one of the oldest languages recorded. Egyptian hieroglyphics go back to the First Dynasty, which begins, according to the most conservative authorities, about 3400 B.C., but according to Sir Flinders Petrie in 5546 B.C.

These *hieroglyphics* (from Greek *ἱερο-*, 'sacred', and *γλυφικ-*, 'carved') were sometimes painted on wood and the like, sometimes carved in stone, and eventually written in conventionalized forms with a reed pen on papyrus. This last form is called hieratic.

The hieratic writing was so called because it was used by priests in the Greek and Roman periods in Egypt. At first it was not greatly different from the hieroglyphics, though more cursive. In the course of time the pictures of the hieroglyphic writing became more and more obscured. Eventually, about 700 B.C., a still more cursive script called Demotic took its place for ordinary purposes, and this was used till nearly the end of the fifth century A.D. From about the third century A.D. the Egyptian Christian Church being strongly influenced by the Greek Church wrote a later form of the Egyptian language, known as Coptic, in Greek characters

supplemented by a few additional letters ultimately derived from hieroglyphics.

After the Arab conquest (A.D. 640) the Egyptian language was gradually superseded by Arabic. Though Coptic, as elaborated by Christian monks, is still read in churches but understood by few, Egyptian ceased to be used as a spoken language in the sixteenth century.

The latest hieroglyphs were written in the third century A.D. A century or two later their meaning was probably forgotten. At any rate, when European scholars began to take an interest in them at the beginning of the nineteenth century all tradition regarding their meaning had completely disappeared.

Under these circumstances their gradual decipherment constitutes a great achievement of patience and ingenuity. The details of the story may be sought elsewhere, but we may note here a few of the conditions that made decipherment possible.

- (i) The scribes had a habit of writing important names, as of royalties, in *cartouches*—i.e. by putting a line round them.
- (ii) Foreign names were written with phonetic signs.
- (iii) The discovery of the Rosetta stone provided a bilingual inscription in hieroglyphics and in Greek.
- (iv) Coptic recorded the later Egyptian forms of many words found to have been written in the hieroglyphics.

With all this we do not know the vowels of the Old Egyptian language because they were not written. We have only consonantal outlines as in some of the Semitic scripts. We cannot adopt the Coptic vowels for Old Egyptian, as the language certainly changed a good deal during the many centuries that hieroglyphics were written.

Indeed, Egyptologists distinguish

- (i) Old Egyptian. Dynasties I–VIII. From Menes, not later than 3400, to c. 2400 B.C.
- (ii) Middle Egyptian. Literary language of Dynasties IX–XVIII c. 2400 to c. 1350 B.C., vernacular to about 1700 B.C. Analytic tendencies appear.
- (iii) Late Egyptian. Dynasties XVIII–XXIV, 1580 to 710 B.C. Analytic tendencies predominate.

- (iv) Demotic in the latest script. Dynasties XXV to late Roman times (700 B.C. to A.D. 470).

From a literary point of view the Golden Age was that of the Middle Kingdom (Dynasties IX–XIII, c. 2400 to 1740 B.C.), which saw a great development of literary activity.

#### 4. *General Character of Egyptian*

Now we may ask what was the general character of this Egyptian language, which was written as early as the fourth millennium (if not in the sixth) B.C., and which finally expired in the sixteenth century A.D.

Egyptian stands between the Semitic languages and the Hamitic languages of East Africa (Galla, Somali, &c.) and of North Africa (Berber dialects). This is true both geographically and linguistically.

Egyptian is related to the Semitic group (Assyrian, Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, &c.), but not so closely as all those are related to each other. The relationship of Egyptian to the African languages mentioned has yet to be worked out in detail: a difficult problem as we have no records of the ancient forms of any African language except Egyptian.

Egyptian shares with the Semitic languages the feature of consonantal roots, generally of three letters.<sup>1</sup> The mechanism of the Semitic verb has been described as 'ringing the changes on internal vowels' together with the use of affixes—while for more considerable modifications of meaning use is made of reduplication and prefixes. Unfortunately the old Egyptian vowels were not recorded. Nevertheless, we may accept this relationship on the authority of competent scholars.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Egyptian *hšb*, 'count', corresponds to Arabic *hasaba*, whence the familiar *hisāb*, 'an account'.

<sup>2</sup> Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, and the following authorities quoted by him:

A. Erman, *Z.D.M.G.* xlv. 93–129.

A. Ember, *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde*, 49–87; 50–86; 51–110.

W. F. Albright, *Amer. J. Semit. Lang.* xxxiv (1913), 81–215; *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et l'archéologie égyptienne et assyrienne*, 40–64.

D. C. Meinhof, *J. Egyptian Archaeol.* viii. 274.



There is evidence to show that the vowel system of Old Egyptian was in the stage rather of Hebrew or of Modern Arabic than of Assyrian or Classical Arabic; and it has been suggested that Egyptian may have changed more rapidly than Arabic owing to the fusion of races in the valley of the Nile.

Egyptian literature includes spells, hymns, records, decrees, letters, didactic treatises, medicine, mathematics, and some long stories.<sup>1</sup> 'The impression', says A. H. Gardiner, 'with which we are left is that of a pleasure-loving people, gay, artistic, and sharp-witted, but lacking in depth of feeling and in idealism.'<sup>2</sup>

### 5. *Decline of Egyptian*

The ethnological problem as to what races contributed to the make-up of the large population in the Nile valley is not a simple one. Excavation has revealed traces of occupation and a developing civilization for some two thousand years before the First Dynasty began with Menes. Remains of ancient burials show more than one type. It is, in any case, quite unlikely that the Egyptian people could have developed out of a single tribe.

At first north and south were distinct kingdoms. In the days of the Middle Kingdom Egypt became a great power, often controlling Palestine and Syria and corresponding with the great kings of Mesopotamia.

The time came, however, when the wealth of Egypt was greater than her power of resistance. Outlying possessions dropped away and then came foreign invaders. Somewhere about 1700 B.C. there is the obscure period of the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings—a dynasty of foreign invaders.<sup>3</sup> The Persians arrived under Cambyses in 527 B.C. and after that date there were no more native dynasties. The Persian rule was ended by Alexander the Great. On his death one of his generals, Ptolemy, founded the Greek Dynasty that came to an end with the death of Cleopatra. For centuries Egypt

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*.

<sup>2</sup> *Egyptian Grammar*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Said to have come from the Khurri in Syria who were strongly mixed with Khatti, Hittite, and Semitic elements. See section 11, below.

remained in Roman occupation, and was spoken of as 'the granary of Rome'. In the seventh century came the Arabs, and Egypt became one of the Islamic powers and in the thirteenth century turned back the barbaric flood from Central Asia which threatened to destroy both Islam and Christianity.

It is of interest to note the complete disappearance of the Egyptian language, the medium of a civilization of such great importance in the history of the world.

It was due doubtless not so much to foreign invasion, but rather to incorporation in the Roman Empire, which in its eastern half used Greek as its official language, and to the complete undermining and finally supersession of the old religion by Christianity and Islam. The Greeks at an earlier period had learned a good deal from the Egyptians, and Herodotus shows considerable curiosity with regard to their customs—but there was nothing in the Egyptian religion or literature that could appeal to the Greeks or Romans. Still less could anything still surviving of the theriomorphic complexities of the Nile have appealed to the monotheistic enthusiasts from Arabia. All the old religion, literature, and historical traditions faded away. The fact that the language was still spoken as late as the sixteenth century shows that the Arab rulers had not tried to stamp it out. Eventually the language of a dead world passed away.

#### 6. *Prehistoric Greece*

Before passing to Mesopotamia we may notice another civilization with its picture writing in the eastern Mediterranean. Crete, the Aegean Islands, the Greek peninsula, and the coast of Asia Minor have remains of cities that rival Egypt in antiquity. In Crete there is an ancient pictorial script, which has not been deciphered.

It seems certain that this ancient Minoan and Mycenaean civilization was created by an artistic, commercial people, who lived in this area long before the Hellenes arrived and brought with them the Greek language.

As to the nature of the language of the Cretan pictographs, of the Mycenaean settlements, and of the most ancient Troy

we can only make guesses based on ancient place-names that are not Greek and on a few words, which are used in Greek and Latin but do not seem to belong to them originally. For instance, the *vine* and the *olive*, both conspicuous products of the Mediterranean lands, have names in Greek and Latin which seem to come from another source.

This fragmentary evidence tells us very little, and does not enable us to read the Cretan writing.<sup>1</sup>

The archaeological evidence supports the view that the people who created the artistic and relatively developed civilization of Crete and Mycenae, with the ceremonial bull-fighting, the great palaces, magnificent golden cups, and emphasis on goddess-worship, were conquered by more virile warrior tribes from the north. These Hellenes brought in the Greek language, which may doubtless have been influenced by the indigenous language, but in the course of time completely superseded it.<sup>2</sup>

Comparative study shows that Greek religion contains much that has been absorbed from other peoples. In this instance it appears that the old religion was not completely destroyed by the new-comers, but much of it was adapted and eventually purified, in a moral sense, by the resultant combination. Greek genius is, then, the child of an amalgamation of two races, one more virile, the other more feminine.

If this be so we have an instance of the disappearance of the medium of a civilization that has been absorbed and modified. The Greek in historical times was not conscious of any foreign elements either in his religion or his language: they had all been completely absorbed.

### 7. *Mesopotamia and Cuneiform Writing*

In Mesopotamia was developed a system of writing known as *cuneiform*, i.e. wedge-shaped. The wedge-like form of the marks used is due to the impression of a stylus on soft clay. Clay was the most abundant material in that country, and

<sup>1</sup> There is nothing to indicate *names*, especially *foreign* names, and no *bilingual* specimen. Attempts to interpret the script as Greek have failed.

<sup>2</sup> The indigenous language can hardly have been Greek as Ripley maintained, but there may have been some Indo-European elements or words introduced before the Hellenic conquest.

damp tablets, when written on, could be rapidly dried in the sun and formed permanent records. The same wedge-like form was imitated in inscriptions carved on rocks. Originally, however, all the cuneiform signs were derived from pictures drawn with lines, as is proved by the most ancient inscriptions, which retain a great deal more of the pictorial forms. In ordinary cuneiform it is impossible to identify the objects represented except by comparison with more ancient forms.

The decipherment of cuneiform in modern times has been another triumph of genius and patience. The first steps were made with the comparatively late inscriptions of the Achaemenid dynasty of Persia, especially the trilingual inscription of Darius the Great on the rock at Behistun. One of the columns in this inscription was in the Old Persian language written in a special alphabetic form of cuneiform. A knowledge of Pahlavi (Middle Persian) inscriptions suggested something of what might be the style of the Old Persian inscriptions. Brilliant guessing identified the word for 'king' and some of the royal names. The letters established in this way gave a clue to the character of the language, which resembled Avestan and Sanskrit, but was different from both.

Another column proved to be in a different variety of cuneiform writing with a great many more characters. This was syllabic, not alphabetical, and as it turned out used a number of ideograms as well as phonograms. Moreover, many of the phonograms could be read in more than one way, being derived from a picture with several synonyms.

With the disentanglement of these complications this second column of Darius's inscription, together with numerous inscriptions and records at Babylon and Nineveh, turned out to be in a Semitic language resembling Hebrew. This language is generally known as Assyrian.<sup>1</sup>

The contents of the Assyrian tablets were found to be very various. A regular library belonging to King Ashur-bani-pal (668 B.C.) contains works on astrology, astronomy, history,

<sup>1</sup> Actually Assyrian and Babylonian were two dialects of the same language.

mythology, magic, medicine, mathematics, prayers, hymns, lists of gods, omens, lexicography, and grammar.<sup>1</sup>

This script and language had been in use for two thousand years before these later days of Babylon. Khammurabi, the famous king of Babylon, dates from about 1900 B.C. and Dungi, the king of Ur, from 2500 B.C.

A series of tablets discovered at Tel-el-Amarna in Egypt show that the Pharaohs of the Eighteenth Dynasty (fourteenth and fifteenth centuries B.C.) corresponded in this language with the kings of the Nearer East. Assyrian was indeed at that time an international language, and the cuneiform script was, as we shall see, still more widely used, being adapted for several other languages.

### 8. *Sumerian*

Among the Assyrian tablets are some that give equivalents of Assyrian words in another language, which they call *lišan Šumēri*, or Sumerian tongue.

This is not an inflectional language like Assyrian or Hebrew but rather agglutinative. Owing to the ambiguous phonetic character of many of the signs, comparison with other languages is difficult. Efforts have been made to connect it with Chinese, with languages of the Caucasus, and even with the Indo-European family. So far no one has been able to prove the relationship of Sumerian to any other language.

Archaeology has fixed Sumer in the south of Mesopotamia, and it seems clear that the Sumerians were established there before the Assyrians arrived, and that the Assyrians adopted from them not only their writing but also a great deal of their religious practices. Indeed, a knowledge of Sumerian seems to have been preserved by the priests as a sacred language of magic and invocation.

The most ancient Sumerian script that has been found, going back to at least 4000 B.C., is more pictorial than ordinary cuneiform, but it is already far removed from simple obvious picture writing. It is supposed there must have been some centuries of development from a still earlier stage. As the first beginnings have not been found in Mesopotamia it

<sup>1</sup> Handcock, *Mesopotamian Archaeology*, p. 104.

has been surmised by some scholars that the Sumerians came from somewhere else, and brought their writing with them.<sup>1</sup> From the types found in Sumerian sculpture it is difficult to determine to what race they belonged. In the long run they were absorbed into the population of Mesopotamia and their ancient language left no trace in the spoken speech of the people.<sup>2</sup>

### 9. *Decline of Assyrian*

Eventually Assyrian also disappeared. For a long while Assyria had been a great power, dominating not only Mesopotamia but also the neighbouring lands and a great part of Asia Minor.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. R. Hall suggested that they might have come from India, but no evidence has confirmed this. Sumerians are drawn with large noses. Some of the most ancient remains, as at Jamdet Nasr, are considered to belong to a *pre-Sumerian* race, but this matter is still obscure.

<sup>2</sup> In the seventh century B.C. there was a brief revival of Sumerian as the official language at Babylon, which had become the stronghold of the priests and a thorn in the flesh of Assyrian rulers of the Second Assyrian Empire. Sennacherib (a contemporary of Hezekiah of Judah) actually razed Babylon to the ground in 691 B.C.

<sup>3</sup> The power was not always in the same hands. The first Semitic Empire of Akkad was founded 3800 B.C. by Sargon, who was said to have been found in an ark of bulrushes on the waters of the Euphrates. He subjugated Elam to the east of Babylonia and subdued countries of the west.

The next dynasty was located farther south at Ur, beginning with Dungi, whose power extended to the Mediterranean.

Then came a period of foreign influence, South Arabians in the north and Elamites in South Babylonia. Next was a revival under Hammurabi, 2370 B.C., who overthrew the Elamites and drove them out. These Elamites were mixed but most of them used an agglutinative language. There was a literary revival at Babylon, whose powers again extended to the Mediterranean. Later, about 1780 B.C., came the Kassites or Kossaeans from the mountains of Elam under Gandis, and this people ruled for nearly six centuries, being partly contemporary with the Hyksos in Egypt. The Empire over the West was lost.

The high priests of Assur became kings of Assyria and threw off allegiance to Babylon. Shalmaneser I, 1300 B.C., claimed the Empire of the West—his son conquered Babylon. Tiglath Pileser I was a great conqueror: he overran Armenia and Cappadocia and hunted wild bulls in Lebanon.

In 1107 B.C. Assyria was defeated by Babylon, once more free of the Elamites. In the eighth century came the second Assyrian Empire. Tiglath Pileser III overran the West and captured Phoenician seaports. Then there were more struggles between Nineveh, Babylon, and Elam.

Eventually Nineveh was destroyed by Scythians and Babylon captured by Cyrus, King of Anshan in Elam.

(See *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, under 'Assyria', &c.)

Cuneiform writing was used throughout this area, but that is no evidence of the spread of the Assyrian language, except in so far as it was used by the king's officers and scribes. The fact that cuneiform was adapted to several languages indicates that there was no displacement of the languages of conquered peoples. Assyria was, in fact, at the meeting-point of several distinct types of language: Semitic, Indo-European, Sumerian, old Asianic dialects of Asia Minor, and the Caucasus and dialects of Turanian or Turkish tribes. It was no accident that located the Tower of Babel in Mesopotamia.

Assyrian civilization had a considerable influence on other countries, especially on the Hebrews, who passed on a version of the Deluge story to Europe. Yet in the way of literature Assyria, like Egypt, had little to contribute to the world. The conquerors who succeeded the Assyrians in western Asia were not interested in Assyrian religion, literature, or language. Until they were defeated by the Greeks, the Persians continued to use the cuneiform script for the three official languages: Persian at Persepolis, Assyrian at Babylon, and Neo-Susian at Susa in Elam. Aramaic became the international language. Under the Greeks the official language was Greek. The Sassanides used Middle Persian (Pahlavi) written in a form of Aramaic script. There is no reason to suppose that either Persian or Greek made much headway among the people. It is more probable that Assyrian gave way to its younger cousin, Arabic, after the Arabian invasion and the introduction of Islam.

#### 10. *Hittite and Asia Minor*

Cuneiform writing was used for writing several languages to the north and east of Assyria. Among these was the language that is generally called *Hittite*. This was really the language of the ruling race in the Hittite Empire and turns out to be related to the Indo-European languages. In vocabulary and in some other matters it may have been influenced by another language, but the grammar and many of the words are definitely of the Indo-European type.

It seems that this 'Hittite' must have been introduced by invaders from the north. The mass of the people, especially

the middle class, used a very different language that is called Khattish, also written in cuneiform. In fact, this has the greater claim to the name Hittite, if it be true that the 'sons of Heth' in the Bible referred to the native race rather than to the invaders.<sup>1</sup> The dominant racial type shown in Hittite art is the Armenoid with hooky nose and receding forehead.

This race type extended down Mesopotamia and is now found throughout Persia and in Afghanistan. It is the type which produced the typical 'Jewish' nose, which does not belong to the Semitic type represented by the Arab. Even in ancient times people of this type spoke several different languages owing to contact with invaders from different directions. Often the imported language survived although the native race-type prevailed.<sup>2</sup>

The Hittites had not only two languages but also two methods of writing. Beside cuneiform they used a hieroglyphic system of writing, which they seem to have invented for themselves. The Hittite hieroglyphics have not yet been deciphered with any certainty. It remains to be proved that the language written by means of these hieroglyphics was Indo-European 'Hittite' and not Khattish.<sup>3</sup>

The Hittites dominated Asia Minor from c. 2000 to 1190 B.C. and their kingdom became a considerable power, rivalling the older monarchies of Egypt and Babylon.

In the eighteenth century B.C. they overwhelmed Assyria and Babylon, and in the thirteenth century they had a great struggle with Egypt. In 1190 the kingdom was ended by the 'sea-nations', by Thracian, Phrygian, and Armenian invaders.

Recent research has shown that the linguistic condition of Asia Minor under the Hittites had further complications. Babylonian (in cuneiform) was then the international

<sup>1</sup> In Egyptian records we hear of the kingdom of Kheta, in the Babylonian tablets of the Khatti.

<sup>2</sup> Nowadays we find people of this racial type speaking Pashtu, Persian, and Armenian, as well as Arabic and Turkish.

<sup>3</sup> This seems probable, as the hieroglyphics were used on monuments, while cuneiform written on clay tablets was used for ordinary purposes and for libraries and archives. (*Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Hittites'.)



language and was used by the Hittites for treaties and diplomatic correspondence. 'Hittite' and *Khattish* have already been mentioned. Farther south there was another Indo-European language, *Lūish*, used by peasants of the country called Luya (W. Cilicia to S. Lycaonia) and also among the Khatti. This tongue seems to have been brought in by the earliest Indo-European settlers perhaps as early as 3000 B.C. It was much more influenced by the earlier languages of the region than was Hittite. Farther on was *Khurriish*, like the last, written in cuneiform. This belongs to North Mesopotamia centred at Urga—Orrhoe—Edessa, and including the country of the Mitanni (Mygdonia). This is the non-Aryan language used by the Mitanni people. Here again there was an Aryan ruling caste, with Aryan names, who probably spoke an Aryan dialect among themselves. Some of them appear to have founded dynasties in cities of Syria and Palestine. At Boghaz Keui, the site of the Hittite capital, was found a copy of a treaty between Shuppiluliuma, the king of the Hittites, and Mattiawaza, the king of the Mitanni, dated 1380 B.C. This invokes as guarantors of the agreement all the deities known to the high contracting parties; including *Mitrashshil* (Mitra gods), *Arunashshil* (Aruna gods), *Indara*, and *Nashattiijanna*. These have been identified with the Aryan deities Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra, and the two Nāsatyas.<sup>1</sup> A Hittite treatise on horses and chariot-racing has a number of technical terms that are clearly Aryan, e.g. *aika-vartanna*, in one turning; *panza-vartanna*, in five turnings; *shatta-vartanna*, in seven turnings, &c.

<sup>1</sup> This passage has been frequently quoted to show that the Vedic pantheon was known to a foreign dynasty as early as the fourteenth century B.C. As later Iranian had *Mithra* it has been argued that *Mitra* must be Indian. It could also be Indo-Iranian. *Aruna* in Hittite means 'sea'.

The Hittites had also a virile god called Inar or Inarash, which has been compared with the Greek *ἀνῆρ*.

On such grounds it has been suggested that the Aryans borrowed Indra and Varuṇa from the Hittites. Such comparisons are hazardous unless they are supported by considerable resemblance in the myths or functions of the deities compared. The Hittites have also Aknish or Agnish, the god of fire. It becomes absurd to borrow the whole Vedic pantheon from elsewhere.

## 11. *Semitic and Indo-European Waves in Asia Minor*

To sum up the early linguistic history of Asia Minor, we may assume first of all a substratum of ancient languages such as the 'Asiatic' Lycian and Lydian, Khattish and Khurriish.<sup>1</sup>

Into this stratum came a series of Semitic waves from the south and a series of Indo-European waves from the north or north-east.

### SEMITIC WAVES

- (i) Canaanite wave: reached Palestine and produced the pre-Hebraic dialects.
- (ii) Hebrew: in which the bulk of the Old Testament is written. Spoken in Palestine apparently from at least 1200 B.C. until the 'Captivity', c. 600 B.C.
- (iii) Amorite: a Semitic language of which little is known. It seems to have had some affinities with Aramaic.
- (iv) Babylonian: the East Semitic language of the Lower Tigris-Euphrates basin (written in cuneiform) of which Assyrian is a northern variant. Vast masses of clay tablets written in this language have been unearthed.

### INDO-EUROPEAN WAVES

- (i) 3000 Lūish, spoken by peasants.
- (ii) 2500 Hittite (Nāsili).  
Aryans introduced horse c. 2000 B.C.
- (iii) 1385 Aryan rulers of Khurri and Mitanni.
- (iv) 1190 Sea nations: Thracians, Phrygians, Armenians.

These various languages reacted on each other. There are Indo-European elements in Lydian, Lycian, and Etruscan.<sup>2</sup> Lūish, when written, was already becoming saturated with the older language. The Hittite rulers maintained their language, though much influenced by their subjects' speech, until their empire ended. The rulers of Mitanni lost their language. The earliest Semitic wave died away. Hebrew maintained itself for many centuries and produced an important literature. Hebrew was succeeded as a spoken language by Ara-

<sup>1</sup> How far these were related to each other or to other languages we are not yet able to say.

<sup>2</sup> Recorded in North Italy but derived from Asia Minor.

maic. Phoenician travelled to North Africa and Spain and even to Marseilles but eventually died out.

The earliest waves, naturally weak in volume, are the first to be absorbed in the substratum or contiguous language (Canaanite and Lūish).

A later wave is stronger and develops a more independent language and even literature—Hebrew and Hittite. This may resist further attacks, especially weak ones, or it may in its turn be overwhelmed by a larger wave of conquest.

So Hittite and the like were overwhelmed by Armenian, while Aramaic held its own up to the invasion by Arabic.

Eventually all these various languages of Asia Minor have faded away and seem to have left no traces in spoken speech. In the days of the Greeks there were still languages in Asia Minor which were not Greek. Some of these, like Phrygian and Armenian, belonged to the Indo-European family. Others, like Phoenician and Aramaic, were Semitic, but others, again, like Lydian, were of a different type, belonging to a group of languages used in Asia Minor before the Aryans came. These 'Asianic' dialects have not yet been connected with the older languages written in cuneiform, but some connexion is quite possible.

At a later period we shall find this area still divided up among various languages—Turkish, Greek, Arabic, Armenian, Kurdish.

## 12. *Indus Valley*

Passing farther east we may notice the ancient civilization of the Indus valley. Here we find an advanced civilization dating from about 3500 to 2500 B.C. Our knowledge of this civilization is at present based on only two sites, Mohenjodaro in Sindh and Harappa in the Punjab. Numerous seals show conspicuous skill in portraying various Indian animals and the use of a system of writing originally pictorial, though many of the signs are already conventionalized. So far it has not been possible to read this script.<sup>1</sup> We do not know what

<sup>1</sup> The efforts of Lt.-Col. Waddell and Dr. Pran Nuth are based on a series of very doubtful assumptions. The same methods would yield results of a sort with any series of symbols taken at random. See Sir John Marshall, *Mohenjo-daro*.

sort of language this people used. Some scholars have been inclined to the view that it might have been an ancient form of Dravidian. Dravidian languages are now spoken in the south of India—Tamil, Telugu, &c.—with an outlier in the form of Brahui spoken by people of a very different type in the hills near Quetta.

This remains possible, but when we consider the linguistic complexities of neighbouring parts of Asia at that time it is clear that there are other possibilities also.

That the language was Vedic Sanskrit is quite unlikely, especially in view of the absence of the horse from among the animals drawn on the seals and of any other evidence of familiarity with that animal. That the language was related to Sumerian is possible. The relationships of Sumerian are, as we have seen, obscure. A close similarity between a few Sumerian signs and a few characters on the Indus seals proves nothing. Independent drawings of the same object may easily resemble each other—moreover, a relationship between the two scripts would not prove anything about the two languages. It has been suggested that Brāhmī, the oldest Indian script hitherto known, as in Aśoka's inscriptions, may have been derived from this Indus valley writing. It has long been felt that Bühler's derivation of the Brāhmī script from a Semitic alphabet of about the eighth century B.C. is not quite satisfactory. The possibility of an indigenous origin was suggested long ago by General Cunningham. In view, however, of the very long gap between 2500 B.C. and 250 B.C. it would be difficult to establish the connexion even if it were true unless we could find some of the missing links. The early Brāhmī characters consist mainly of simple geometrical forms, which with a little ingenuity can be derived from any system of symbols, if one is allowed to select some twenty out of two or three hundred.<sup>1</sup>

If we could be sure that Brāhmī was derived from the Indus valley script and if we could also assume that the

<sup>1</sup> It is possible to derive the Phœnician (and so the Greek and Italian alphabets) from Egyptian hieroglyphics. Many scholars have accepted that derivation. But no amount of comparison with the Roman alphabet would have solved the riddle of the hieroglyphics.

phonetic values of the Indus valley originals were similar to those of the Brāhmī derivatives, then we should have some idea of the pronunciation of a dozen or so out of the Indus valley signs. With luck, we should be able to get a few words, and this would be at least a beginning towards decipherment. But any interpretation based on a series of guesses, without confirmation, remains in the air. Most of the usual conditions of decipherment are still lacking.

### 13. *Ganges Basin*

There is another great river valley in North India where we might expect to find the remains of a civilization as ancient as that of Mohenjo-daro, namely, that of the Ganges and Jumna. So far nothing of the kind has been found, though there are traditions of vast antiquity. We have to remember that this valley has become a vast alluvial plain in which the actual river-beds have continually fluctuated. The remains of the Mauryan Pātaliputra are many feet below the surface and not far from the water-level. If that is the position of remains dating from the third century before Christ, how much deeper must be the remains of the third millennium. It is quite possible that a whole civilization is buried in the Ganges mud. On the other hand, it is also possible that the pre-Aryan civilization of the Ganges valley neither built in stone, having an abundance of wood in the forests, nor recorded its language on any durable substance. As to what that language was, we can only make guesses based on the surviving forms of non-Aryan languages in India. It is highly probable that Dravidian dialects of an ancient form were spoken farther north than the modern Dravidian languages now are. This is indicated by some peculiarities in the speech of the people. There are also traces of the Munda type of speech<sup>1</sup> as far north as the Punjab. There may also have been other languages which have disappeared entirely. The copious vocabulary of Sanskrit and other forms of the Indo-Aryan language contain many words of which the origin is obscure.

<sup>1</sup> As in the language of the Santhāls of Bengal, belonging to the Austrie family, with related languages extending far to the south-east.

#### 14. *Aryan in India*

The Aryans speaking the Vedic language occupied the upper part of the Indus valley, with the eastern parts of Afghanistan and the Punjab, some time before 1500 B.C. and established themselves in the Middle Country (*Madhyadeśa*) at the top of the Ganges–Jumna valley. There is no direct evidence for the date of this invasion. 1500 B.C. is regarded by many as a reasonable estimate having regard to the indirect evidence, e.g.

- (i) the amount of the religious literature produced between the time of the invasion and the time of Buddha about 500 B.C. and the considerable developments contained therein.
- (ii) the linguistic development from the earliest preserved form of the Vedic language to the dialects used in Asoka's inscriptions of about 250 B.C.
- (iii) the dates at which Aryan tribes seem to have made their appearance in Mesopotamia and Asia Minor.

Others, however, regard 2000 B.C. as a more probable date, and there is the possibility which archaeology may eventually be able to test, that it was the influx of the warlike Aryans in the north that brought to an end the rich cities of the Indus valley.

The language which the Aryans brought with them into India was closely related to the language of other Aryans, who settled in Iran and have left records of their language (at a later date) in the Avestan scriptures and the Old Persian inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings. The earliest records of this Indo-Aryan language is preserved in the Vedas, which were memorized and passed down by tradition from generation to generation of teacher and pupil. This system still survives. For the *Rig-Veda*, the oldest collection, special precautions were taken to guard against the slightest deviation from the proper reading or from the correct pronunciation. This care was due to the importance of the verses used as *mantras*, that is, as magical formulae in the various rites. Thus we have a remarkable example of a considerable body

of religious literature preserved by oral tradition independent of writing. This does not prove that writing was unknown, especially for profane purposes. The sacred literature was secret, only to be revealed to men of the higher classes, i.e. probably at first only to initiates of Aryan descent and then only to those of the higher castes who claimed such descent.

The language of this Aryan religion and the Aryan *Dharma*—religious law of life including social and family duties—spread down the Ganges valley. It may have been influenced in pronunciation and vocabulary by pre-Aryan dialects, but eventually it superseded all non-Aryan languages over nearly all North India. Along the Vindhya this Indo-Aryan speech is bounded by small Dravidian dialects; in the Himalayas it runs up to languages of the Tibeto-Burman group and some survivals of the Austric family, which also appears in the south-west of Bengal.

It is noteworthy that in the south of India Sanskrit spread as the language of religion and law, but the Dravidian languages were not displaced. On the contrary some of them, notably Tamil and Telugu, eventually developed literatures of their own.<sup>1</sup>

It may be asked why Indo-Aryan superseded the ordinary village dialect in the north and not in the south.<sup>2</sup> The Vindhya do not form a serious barrier to communication. Sanskrit law and religion, as we have seen, spread throughout the south. Asoka's inscriptions prove the use of an official Prākṛit in the south. Buddhism and Jainism both found their way there, with scriptures in Indo-Aryan languages. We may suppose that the Aryans were more numerous in the area familiar to the *Rig-Veda*, that they formed a larger proportion of the population in their settlements, actually ploughing the soil with their own hands. The non-Aryans would be driven out or reduced to the position of menials. To the south of India came priests, rulers, and merchants, but not farmers. The villages remained largely the same.

The Ganges valley seems to have been always one of the

<sup>1</sup> An Indo-Aryan language, Sinhalese, occupies the southern half of Ceylon.

<sup>2</sup> See D. Bhandarkar, *Lectures*.

most populous regions of India. There are indications in the literature that there were powerful non-Aryan tribes in the valley, who were absorbed by the Aryan system. It is obvious that a large non-Aryan population could not have been removed by the Aryan invaders. Yet we find that the Aryan speech has spread all down the valley. There are only sporadic traces of pre-Aryan speech in the Indo-Aryan vernaculars and in the language of primitive Munda tribes like the Santhāls.

One powerful factor in this linguistic change must have been the freedom of movement up and down the rivers, and across the vast plains. The accumulated effect of many centuries of this movement could have a considerable result, in spreading, in some form or other, the language of the educated. The Aryanization of the Middle Land and of the Ganges valley as far as Patna may have taken place early enough to prevent any literary growth in a non-Aryan medium; whereas Tamil literature is traced back to the early centuries of the Christian era. It is also possible that the dominant pre-Aryan language of the Ganges valley was not Dravidian but some other form of language, which made less resistance to Indo-Aryan.

### 15. *Chinese*

Ancient China offers us another instance of a developed civilization situated in the lands watered by a great river, with a system of picture writing. The most remarkable feature of this instance is that the tradition has never been broken. China writes to-day characters derived from her most ancient pictographs. Each character is still a whole word and there is no alphabet. The forms of the characters have changed from time to time but the history of different styles has been recorded, and the changes of individual characters can be traced back to the time of the oldest writing extant.

Thus there have not been in China such difficulties of decipherment as were encountered in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

On the other hand the identity of characters conceals considerable phonetic variation. Each character originally



contains two elements: one the 'radical', showing the general class to which the word belongs, e.g. bird, water, fire, &c., i.e. an *ideogram*;<sup>1</sup> and the other is a phonetic symbol, i.e. the sign for another word of somewhat similar sound. These phonetic indications are not exact in any of the Chinese dialects. Linguistic comparison with languages related to Chinese has shown that the Chinese use of tones has been developed alongside of considerable phonetic decay and that originally the language must have been pronounced very differently, with many dissyllables and with some words of even three syllables. Allowing for such phonetic changes it is still true that Chinese has remained substantially the same language for at least four thousand years.

The early beginnings of China are naturally obscure. The founders of the Chinese civilization seem to have established themselves on the banks of the Yangtze-Kiang in the Middle Kingdom. They were surrounded by other tribes of a similar physical type, but there were also differences, especially in the West. They gradually imposed their form of civilization, including their writing, on the whole area now included in China, with a quarter of the world's population.

The Manchus, who provided the last Chinese Dynasty, are a distinct race in the north related to the Mongolians of Central Asia, and possessing a distinct language, which is written in an alphabetic script. There are other racial differences in what was the Chinese Empire. We may exclude the Tibetans, who were only nominally subject to the suzerainty of the Emperor, and who possess a language of their own, with a literature written in an Indian script. In the West there are 'barbarians' called Miaos, of a distinct type and a language that is not properly Chinese.

Throughout the whole 'Empire' the Chinese characters are current, and can be written and understood by the literate whatever be their pronunciation, just as all Europeans can understand the numerals 1, 2, 3, &c. Thus the script forms a means of communication between men of opposite ends of China who cannot understand each other's dialect; but it does not in itself, apart from the official

<sup>1</sup> There are now 214 such radicals.

'Mandarin' pronunciation, serve to reduce differences of dialect.<sup>1</sup>

Chinese may thus claim a longer line of stability than any other language. This may be a ground for congratulation and national pride. At the same time it may be noted that the language, or at any rate the written language, has been adopted by tribes speaking other languages. Also, this conservatism in language reflects centuries of stagnation. Satisfied long ago that her civilization represented the height of wisdom, China stood still, while the rest of the world was changing. Now at last seeking to change rapidly on modern lines, she is handicapped by the possession of an antique method of writing and a language which it is almost impossible to write in a modern alphabet.

<sup>1</sup> The Japanese, who speak a very different language and who have invented a syllabary, use an immense number of Chinese words in their literature. These Chinese words are written in Chinese characters and may be pronounced either as in Chinese or with a Japanese equivalent. This use of Chinese characters has accentuated the difficulty of adopting Roman characters for Japanese.

## CHAPTER IV

# THE TIMES OF DARIUS THE GREAT AND THE BUDDHA

### 1

IN the last chapter we were mainly concerned with three systems of civilization developed in three great river-valleys: Egypt, Mesopotamia, and China. In each of these we found a language recorded in a form of picture writing from a very ancient date down to the beginnings of ordinary 'ancient' history, that is, down to the oldest periods dealt with by the writers in the 'classical' languages, Greek and Latin.

We shall now take a view of the world at a later date, that is, about a century either side of 500 B.C.

The great river-valleys of Egypt and Mesopotamia accumulated surplus wealth. This proved an attraction at first to individuals settling in the country and afterwards to organized invaders who took possession.

In Egypt, it seems, one quite considerable invasion, that of the Hyksos or Shepherd Kings, was absorbed without any considerable dislocation of the life of the country. For a while Egypt actually dominated Syria, but after the arrival of the Persians in 527 B.C. Egypt lost her political independence and was exploited by each dominant empire in turn.

In Mesopotamia the organized power of the Great King was used not only for advantageous trading but also for exacting tribute from lesser kings far to the north. The medley of languages used in that empire is indicated by the number of languages written in cuneiform. It is clear that the empire was based rather on military power than on social structure and absorption into a common civilization.

### 2. *Persians*

This was all the more so with the empire that succeeded it, that of the Persians.

Starting as an obscure tribe in the uplands of Iran these enterprising warriors, speaking an Aryan language, laid hold

of the wealth and the organization of Babylon in the seventh century B.C. The Persians succeeded in extending their power more widely than any of the Assyrian kings. In the west they conquered Egypt and the whole of Asia Minor. This brought them into contact and then into conflict with the Greeks, who had a line of cities established in Ionia on the west coast of Asia Minor and in neighbouring islands.

In the east they held all the lands as far as Bactria and the north of India, where the Indus basin constituted a Persian satrapy, paying a large annual tribute to the coffers of the King of Kings.<sup>1</sup>

The climax of this empire was reached in the reign of Darius the Great (522–485 B.C.), who perfected the system of posting by stages along the main routes. This was in fact the first considerable empire to be based not on communications by water but on the mobility of the horse.

The trilingual and even quadrilingual inscriptions of the period are indications of the linguistic complexity of this empire. There were three official languages, namely those of Persepolis, Babylon, and Susa.

If we read Herodotus' account of the armies brought up against the Greeks, especially the great host collected by Xerxes, it is evident that they were a polyglot collection, and all the more unwieldy on that account. The light archers from India with their cotton garments could not have understood the Persians or the Medes, still less the troops from Syria or Phoenician sailors. The Persian Empire lasted till it was conquered by Alexander the Great, but there is nothing to indicate any permanent extension of the Persian language. The cuneiform script was found cumbrous for ordinary clerical work. Old Persian has not been found written in anything else. On the other hand the scribes made an extensive use of Aramaic—a Semitic language already using an alphabet. It is of interest to notice that the Aryan Persians invented no writing of their own; they took over and adapted a series of Semitic alphabets:

<sup>1</sup> When Alexander invaded India, he was exploring one of the richest provinces of the Persian Empire after capturing the capital and all the other provinces.

- (i) a special form of cuneiform for Old Persian, the language of the King of Kings and his particular people.
- (ii) a form of the Aramaic script for Middle Persian or Pahlavi, the language of the Sassanides in the third century A.D.; also used for the language of the Avesta and of its commentary, which was called the Zend.
- (iii) Arabic script for Modern Persian from the tenth century A.D.

Moreover, it was not until some centuries after the Arab conquest that the Persians developed any important literature of their own.

#### TABLE OF IRANIAN LANGUAGES

##### I. OLD IRANIAN.

Old Persian, Median, Language of the Avesta.

##### II. MIDDLE IRANIAN.

Middle Persian, Middle Parthian, Sogdian, Khotanese.

##### III. NEW IRANIAN.

- (1) *New Persian*: Lurī, Tātī, Kumzārī.
- (2) Gūrānī.
- (3) Kurdish.
- (4) *Central dialects*: Gazī, Soī, Farīzandī, Kāshānī, Khūrī.
- (5) *Caspian dialects*: Māzandarānī, Gīlakī, Tālīshī.
- (6) Simnānī.
- (7) Balōchī.
- (8) *Pashto of Afghanistan*: Wānetsī.
- (9) Parāchī, Ormurī.
- (10) *Pamir dialects*: Munjī, Yidghah, Ishkāshmī, Sanglēchī, Zēbakī, Yāzghulāmī, Rōshānī, Oroshorī, Bartangī, Shughnī, Sarīkolī, Wanchī, Wakhī.
- (11) Yaghnābī.
- (12) *Ossetic dialects*: Digor, Iron.

#### 3. Languages of the Persian Empire

Among the many languages spoken in the Persian Empire we may mention the following: Greek, Egyptian, Hebrew, Phoenician, Aramaic, Assyrian, Phrygian, Lydian, Neo-Susian, Armenian, Median, N.W. Indian.

The language of the scriptures regarded as sacred by the King of Kings was Avestan, and his great deity was named Ahuramazda, but neither the religion nor the language were

familiar to the great majority of his subjects. It was centuries later that another Iranian cult, Mithraism,<sup>1</sup> spread widely in the West and was even brought to Britain by Roman legionaries.

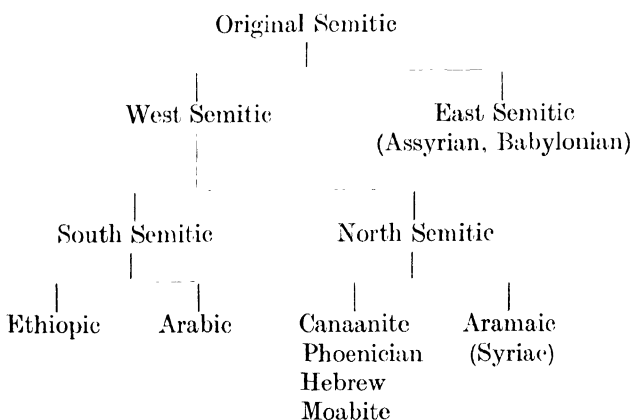
The fortunes of Greek will be dealt with separately.

The history of Egyptian has been outlined already.

Of the remainder, some dialects like those of Phrygian were distant cousins of Persian and Greek and were eventually absorbed by Greek; the Iranian and Indian dialects in the East were not greatly affected; Armenian does not come into prominence till much later.

More important in the Empire must have been the Semitic languages: Assyrian, the main language of Babylon, Hebrew, the scripture language of the Jews, Phœnician of the enterprising maritime people on the coast of Palestine who founded Carthage and gave their alphabet to the Greeks, and Aramaic, which had become the ordinary spoken language of Palestine by 400 B.C. or earlier, and as we have seen was the clerks' language of the Persian Empire. Semitic languages resemble one another very closely, so that the speaker of one can readily learn another. We may conclude that from a practical point of view, outside Iran and court circles, the Persian Empire continued to be, as before, more Semitic in language than anything else.

#### TABLE OF SEMITIC LANGUAGES



<sup>1</sup> So called from the deity Mithra, a name of the Sun, which appears in the Vedic religion as Mitra closely associated with Varuṇa.

#### 4. *Other Contemporary Languages in the West*

Some of the languages which came into contact with Greek will be mentioned in the next chapter. Farther west were the Italic languages including Latin, which will also be dealt with separately. In connexion with Latin we shall have to notice a language of which not much is known, namely that of the Etruscans. The Etruscans seem to have come from Asia Minor and brought their language with them. This was written in a form of the Greek alphabet. The Etruscans contributed a good deal to the civilization of Rome, but they were completely absorbed and their language disappeared.

By 500 B.C. there were a number of other tribes moving across Europe, whose languages were related more or less closely to Greek and Latin, but not reduced to writing till much later, when they came to be known as Celtic and Germanic languages. Besides these Indo-European languages there were the old languages, on which these were impinging, especially in the west, though we know very little about them, such as Iberian in what is now Spain, probably related to the Basque of the Pyrenees, Ligurian on the Riviera, and the language of the pre-Celtic inhabitants of the British Isles.

#### 5. *Indo-Aryan*

Belonging to the same Indo-European family and closely related to Old Persian and Avestan was the language of Indian archers in Xerxes' army. As was explained above (Ch. III, § 12) in connexion with the picture writing of the Indus valley, North India was invaded by Aryans at some time before 1500 B.C. By 500 B.C. the Aryan tongue had spread down the Ganges valley and occupied the whole country north of the Vindhya mountains. By this time, however, changes had set in. These changes were partly in (a) the traditional language of literature used by Brahmins and persons educated by them, and partly in (b) the speech of the mass of the people, including the women of the higher castes.

In the literary tradition the language of the Vedas gradually

changes through the stages represented by the theological treatises called *Brāhmaṇas* and by the philosophical *Upaniṣads* to the perfected form of Classical Sanskrit. In the meantime the spoken speech was changing more rapidly and distinct dialects were growing up in different parts of India.

About 500 B.C. arose in Bihar the great founder of Buddhism, Gautama of the Śākya clan. Now it is recorded that when the Buddha began preaching in the Deer-park near Benares he did not use the language of learned Brahmins, Sanskrit, but spoke to the people in their own tongue. It is a fact that the earliest surviving scriptures of the Buddhists are not written in Sanskrit, but in a form of Prākṛit (natural language) which is named Pāli. All the tradition and all the evidence available agree that the early Buddhist Church did not use the learned language of the Brahmin pundits.

The inscriptions of the Emperor Aśoka, a pious Buddhist, are not in Sanskrit but in Prākṛit dialects, chiefly in an eastern dialect, the court language of Pātaliputra, and others in local dialects of the north-west and south.

The earliest scriptures of the Jains are also in a Prākṛit, called Ardha-Māgadhī.

These facts have led to some minor confusions. The Buddha spoke to the people at Benares in the kingdom of Magadha; he spoke in the popular language; therefore, it is argued, he spoke Māgadhī. The Pāli scriptures purport to convey the teaching of the Buddha, therefore, it was thought, Pāli must be a form of Māgadhī. As a matter of fact there is nothing to show exactly what dialect the Buddha used. The name Māgadhī was used by later grammarians for a literary version of an eastern dialect of rather peculiar form, which was thought appropriate by the dramatists for fishermen, policemen, and foreign spies. We can hardly suppose the lingua franca of the kingdom of Magadha was of this peculiar type, still less the local dialect of Benares.

Again, the fact that the oldest Buddhist scriptures preserved in manuscripts of Ceylon and Burma are in Pāli does not prove that the Buddha spoke that language. On the contrary there are indications that the scriptures were previously current in another form of Prākṛit.



Later on the school of the Mahāyāna 'great vehicle' adopted Sanskrit as its medium. With the dominance of the Great Vehicle in India, Sanskrit replaced Pāli (or any other Prākṛit) among the Buddhist communities in India.

We have seen that the inscriptions of Asoka are in Prākṛit. Then come inscriptions partly in Prākṛit, partly Sanskritized, and eventually inscriptions in pure Sanskrit. This has led some scholars to suppose that Sanskrit was evolved at a later date after a complete break from the Vedic language. According to these scholars the stages were:

Early Vedic language.

Later Vedic language.

Early Prākṛit.

Sanskrit (literary language revived).

Later Prākṛit.

It was even supposed that Sanskrit was revived at the time of the Guptas. This has been proved to be an impossible view. Sanskrit was a continuous product of the Vedic schools and was used continuously by Brahmins, whatever the Buddhists and Jains were doing.

At about 500 B.C. Prākṛit would not have travelled quite as far from the literary standard as in Aśoka's inscriptions. Quite probably some of the phonetic tendencies which distinguish the dialects represented in those inscriptions already distinguished the Aryan language of different parts of India, but the language was still substantially one. The eastern dialect with *l* for *r* and in many forms *e* for *o* may have been difficult for a man from Taxila or Ujjain to understand.

In Aśoka's time it was thought necessary to inscribe the Edicts in local forms of speech, i.e. as known to the officials. To what extent the more archaic literary language was understood by the masses at that time it is impossible to say. It is possible that it was generally understood, at least the drift of it, though only those who had been educated in a Brahmanic school could speak it correctly. In the same way to-day Urdu is understood by thousands who cannot speak it correctly.

6. *Ancient Arabic*

In the meantime a considerable civilization had developed in the south of Arabia.

This is revealed by a series of early Arabian alphabetic inscriptions belonging to the Sabaeen and other kingdoms. The Sabaeen inscriptions go back to 800 B.C., and we are reminded of the Biblical story of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon (c. 950 B.C.), though indeed she is not mentioned in any inscription. The obscure struggles of this kingdom with its neighbours do not concern us here. It may be noted that at one time the trade between India and Egypt passed by way of the South Arabian ports. This trade was diverted when the Ptolemies established an overland route from India to Alexandria.

South Arabia was thus left isolated, and it was a more northerly form of Arabic spoken by the nomadic tribes which became, many centuries later, the classical language of Islam and spread widely over the Nearer East and North Africa.

## 7

Of the many languages that were current at this period some were soon to disappear, others were to survive in obscurity for some centuries. There are only a few that still continue to interest the historian. These are Greek, Latin, Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, and Chinese,<sup>1</sup> all languages of great literatures and all but two members of the Indo-European family.

<sup>1</sup> To a lesser degree Armenian and Aramaic.

## CHAPTER V

### ANCIENT GREEK

#### 1. *Aegean Civilization*

IT is doubtful when Greek was first spoken in the Aegean area. In other words, we do not know in what period speakers of the Indo-European dialect which developed into the historical forms of Greek first entered the Peloponnese, the Aegean islands, or the coasts of Asia Minor. It seems quite certain that a non-Greek language or more than one occupied all this area before the speakers of the earliest form of Greek arrived. We may go farther, and say that it is improbable that the speech of the earlier inhabitants belonged to the Indo-European family at all.

The earlier civilization of this region, vastly older than that developed by the Greeks of historic times, has been called Aegean, as it originated in Crete and other islands of the Aegean Sea. Aegean civilization includes that which was developed by the islanders, especially of Crete, and therefore called Minoan, and also the later culture developed on the mainland, known as Mycenaean, as Mycenae appears to have been its most important centre. The Mycenaean civilization arose in late Minoan times, so that the two systems overlapped from about the fifteenth century B.C. to the end of the last Minoan period.

Now for a number of reasons, which will be mentioned, it appears to be certain that the Minoan language did not resemble Greek. With regard to the Mycenaean language the evidence is not so clear and the question remains open.

The archaeological and anthropological investigations of the last hundred years indicate an early difference between the inhabitants of the Aegean islands and those of the mainland. The islands were inhabited in early Neolithic times (as far back perhaps as 10,000 B.C.) by a people resembling the Mediterranean race of North Africa. For several thousand years, well into the fourth millennium B.C., this people

remained undeveloped in a savage condition, and with only rudimentary arts. A new life started in Crete, a larger island combining the relative security of its insularity with the great fertility of its fields. This island gained a knowledge of the use of bronze before 4000 B.C., and maintained very early contacts with Egypt. In the second half of the third millennium (the third Early Minoan period) the town of Cnossos developed into a powerful little state. A pictographic script was developed, and great progress made in the arts.

The mainland in the meantime had been settled by neolithic land-folk, with a distinct form of pottery, who seem to have been akin to contemporary tribes on the Danube and in the Carpathians.

This people was invaded (Early Minoan third period) by a bronze-using people from the south-east, similar in type to the islanders.

In the first Middle Minoan period (2100 to 1900 B.C.) the so-called Minyan ware indicates the invasion of the mainland by some other people, possibly from Asia Minor and related to the Etruscans. Some centuries later (c. 1500 B.C.) a great deal of Cretan culture was introduced into the mainland. Whether this was the result of conquest or of peaceful intercourse we do not know. When Crete collapsed about a century later, Mycenae seems to have become the dominant city in this region. Now the people of Mycenae or at least the aristocrats of Mycenae were known as Achaeans. To what race did the Achaeans belong? What kind of language did they speak?

## 2. *Minoan*

The Minoan people invented a pictorial script and later a linear script of two types. None of this writing has been read. All attempts to decipher it on the hypothesis that the language is Greek have failed. Moreover, there was a syllabary in Cyprus which survived into historic times, when it was used for writing the Greek language. Some specimens of this transcription of Greek shows how ill suited was the Cypriot syllabary for the purpose. The syllabary was clearly devised for a different kind of language.

Moreover, in Crete itself, a tradition survived that the Eteo-Cretans (True Cretans) represented the original inhabitants. They maintained themselves chiefly in the east of the island, and continued to speak their own language in historical times. A fragment written in Greek characters shows that it was not Greek.<sup>1</sup> There are traces of non-Greek languages in traditions and survivals into historic times, especially on the coast of Asia Minor,<sup>2</sup> and also in a series of place-names which are not Greek, in particular the whole series ending in *-nthos* and *-ssos*. Besides this, it should be noted that Greek vocabulary contains many words which are not Indo-European, including the names of the typical Mediterranean products, the vine and the olive. There can be no doubt that the Minoan language was not Indo-European. This conclusion can gain further support from the nature of Minoan civilization as revealed by archaeology.

The goddess with doves or snakes associated with a young god subordinate to her is suggestive of certain non-Aryan cults in the Mediterranean region.<sup>3</sup>

The festival sports of bull-fighting which seem to have had a religious origin,<sup>4</sup> were unknown to the Aryan charioteers who are revealed by the Veda, and whose type reappears in Homer. It is often asserted that a matriarchal system survived for a long time in this civilization, but the proofs of this are said to be inconclusive. Clearly there is no evidence of the virile warlike mentality associated with the earliest monuments of Indo-European speech.

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Bury, *History of Greece*, 1900, p. 136.

<sup>2</sup> An inscription at Lemnos seems to resemble Etruscan, another at Praesus in East Crete in early Greek letters is in some non-Greek language. Lydian has some resemblance to Etruscan but seems to be mixed with Indo-European elements. Lycian also may have been a mixed language with Asiatic elements. Karian, like Phrygian, seems to have belonged to the *satem* group; Strabo says it was not ill-sounding and adopted many Greek words. (H. W. Smyth, *Greek Dialects. Ionia*, p. 24.)

<sup>3</sup> In this region the notion of the 'Mother of God' is endemic and has doubtless played its part in developing the many local Madonnas of Mediterranean Christianity.

<sup>4</sup> This religious origin is probably at the basis of the deep-rooted popularity of this sport in the Iberian peninsula, though the technique may have changed.

### 3. *Mycenae*

We have no right to assume that the people on the mainland in early Minoan times spoke the same language as the Cretans. We may feel assured that their language was not Indo-European, because we are convinced that this type of language came later with horses and iron. We may be led to conjecture that the fourth-millennium speech of the Peloponnese resembled Ligurian,<sup>1</sup> or some fragment of language found on the north side of the Mediterranean. We may deduce that the bronze-using invaders at the end of the third millennium introduced new linguistic materials with the place-names in *-ssos*, *-nthos*, and *-ene*, which are also conspicuous in the Islands.<sup>2</sup> The strong Cretan influence about 1500 B.C. may have brought in new words, but there is no proof of any considerable settlement such as might have affected the language of the people.

Yet all this is conjectural, throwing no clear light into the obscurity that precedes the coming of Greek.

Contemporary with the Late Minoan Period I were the Mycenaean Tombs (1580–1450 B.C.).<sup>3</sup> In Period II (1450–1375 B.C.) Crete collapsed and Mycenae took the lead. This domination by Mycenae is evidently reflected in Greek traditions.

Agamemnon, the king of Mycenae, leads the Achaean host to the siege of Troy. This event, according to tradition, took place early in the twelfth century B.C.

In the eleventh century arrived a flood of Dorians, not the first of the Greek-speaking peoples to come, but the last. These Dorians extended the use of iron and the practice of cremation. They were vigorous and warlike, and less civilized than the peoples they found in Greece. They destroyed the great cities of Mycenae and Tiryns. They occupied most of the lands of the Peloponnese, but left, as we shall see, a core of earlier Greeks in the uplands of Arcadia.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 77, 106–9, 143–4.

<sup>2</sup> The people who introduced the 'Minyan' wave at the beginning of the second millennium may, it is thought, have been connected with the Etruscans.

<sup>3</sup> The name of the town *Mykene* is of the Bronze islander type.

A study of the distribution and history of the Greek dialects supports the clear evidence of Greek tradition that the Dorians were the new-comers, later than the Ionians and the speakers of Aeolic and Arcadian dialects.

The Achaeans of Homer's epic associated with Mycenae seem to be mentioned in Egypt; the *Akaiwusi* came in the thirteenth century by sea to attack Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

A Hittite text of the fourteenth century mentions the *Akhkhiyawa* as a naval people on the west of Asia Minor ruled by a Prince Attarsiyos.<sup>2</sup> A reader of Homer's *Iliad* naturally supposes that the Achaeans were Greeks. It is possible that they were, though, as will appear, they could not have talked the language we find them speaking in the Homeric poems; that is a literary product later by centuries.

Moreover, the Trojans are represented as speaking the same language as the Achaeans.

Troy was an ancient city, as excavations have proved. Even in historical times there were on the littoral of Asia Minor remnants of non-Aryan languages like Lycian, and of Indo-European dialects distinct from Greek, for instance Phrygian. It is impossible to assign a language to each of the superimposed cities of the Trojan site—or to say what was the speech of Priam's city. Very probably the rulers of the Troad in the thirteenth century B.C. spoke some dialect of the Thracian-Phrygian group,<sup>3</sup> for these people established themselves about this time in the north-west of Asia Minor, alarming both the Hittites and the Egyptians. At the end of the century they overthrew the Hittite dominion (c. 1200 B.C.). Corresponding to Priam in Mycenaean Troy was Atreus, the son of Pelops, in Mycenae, and Peleus, father of Achilles, in Thrace. These names do not appear to be Greek.

So it is possible that the rulers on both sides were rather Phrygian than Greek.<sup>4</sup> Even if this were so, it is still likely that Agamemnon and Achilles spoke some form of Greek, just as Alexander the Great spoke Attic Greek and not Macedonian.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Homer's *Ἀχαιοί*, Latin *Achivi*.

<sup>2</sup> This has suggested comparison with Atreus, the father of Agamemnon.

<sup>3</sup> See J. L. Myers, *Ency. Brit.*, 14th ed., under 'Troy.'

<sup>4</sup> *āvaξ* = *wanaks* = 'king' is not Indo-European.

#### 4. *Hellenic Waves*

It is quite possible that the real facts were more complicated than is supposed by such a question as—Did the Mycenaeans speak Greek? There is much in favour of the view that the Greek-speaking peoples came to Greece in separate waves—Ionian, Arcado-Aeolic, and lastly Dorian. The second of these may have been the people of the Achaeon dominion, though the ruling family were rather Thracian—a foreign dynasty. Eventually this Hellenic drift, culminating in the Doric blast, destroyed both the Minoan civilization, which was Mediterranean, and the later Mycenaean civilization, which was a revival of Minoan arts with a strong mixture of northern blood. The earlier Greeks were civilized by the ancient cities, the Dorian invaders were more numerous and more distinctive. There remained embedded in the older Greek cities, especially of Ionia, enough of the artistic instincts of the Minoan peoples to blend with the greater vigour and moral force of the northerners to produce the glories of classical Greece. The whole process of settlement occupied five or six centuries. The details cannot be traced. We cannot determine when a Greek dialect became dominant in each city or area, for history begins after the process was complete, except in Crete and Asia Minor. As a net result the northerners imposed their language on the Aegean area, but in doing so they modified their own language, as they changed many of their ways, adopting new words and new ideas.<sup>1</sup>

#### 5. *Dialects*

When the Greek dialects appear in history they are divided into four great groups:

- (a) *Ionian* with a special variety *Attic*. The details of local variations are not so well known as in the other groups,

<sup>1</sup> Meillet, *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque*, p. 44, 2nd ed., 1920. 'Les Hellènes ont accepté une culture méditerranéenne. Le vocabulaire grec réfléchit un type de civilisation tout profane éloigné de l'ancienne culture indo-européenne.' Many common Greek words are not Indo-European, e.g. the words for *olive*, *oil*, *wine*, *fig*, *mint*, *cypress*, *rose*, *lily*, and *king*.



because general forms were widely used from early times, and literary languages, Ionian and Attic, helped to obscure the differences in individual cities.

- (b) *Arcadian* and *Cypriot* (associated with the Achaeans).
- (c) *Aeolic*, which includes Lesbian, Thessalian, and Boeotian.
- (d) *Western* or *Dorian*, including the dialects of the latest Greek invaders of the Peloponnese, of Sicily and South Italy.

It has been suggested that these represent successive waves of Greek immigration. We need not suppose that the waves were of equal strength or duration. Though the last has left an impression of violence, the earlier waves may have been gentler and more prolonged, percolating gradually from valley to valley and from island to island, without causing any commotion great enough to leave its mark on tradition. Moreover, after the first settlements, cities belonging to the four groups established other cities, often at a considerable distance, to provide for a growing population.

For while the geographical features of the Aegean area encouraged the independence of small units, the comparative ease of communication by sea facilitated trade and colonization at a distance, and eventually favoured Pan-Hellenic sentiment centred in such institutions as the Oracle at Delphi and the Olympic Games.

(a) *Ionian*. The fact that the sea on the west of the mainland was called the Ionian Sea has been taken to indicate that the Ionians at one time occupied the Peloponnese and developed the Mycenaean civilization, being expelled later by the Achaeans. When history begins, they are found in Attica on the mainland, in Euboea and most of the Cyclades islands, and in Ionia, on the coast of Asia Minor. In Attica the main city was Athens, destined to become the most famous of all Greek cities. The presiding deity was a goddess, Athene. Ionia, stretching from Phocaea and Smyrna down to Halicarnassus, was the part of Greece that came into contact with Persia, and after being conquered by Lydia was absorbed into the Persian Empire, though a subsequent revolt led to the Persian attempts to conquer Greece. The

twelve cities of Ionia joined in the worship of the sea-god Poseidon, a Mediterranean deity. These cities became wealthy, and like their neighbours, the Lydians, gained a name for effeminate luxury.

The Dorians despised the Ionians as 'Pelasgians', considering them not to be true Greeks. It is quite probable that this first Ionian wave mingled with the older inhabitants and adopted much more of their culture than did the later immigrants. If this is so, it is interesting to note that Athens, an Ionian city, became dominant, and imposed her language as the standard for the rest of Greece; as Rome, the meeting-point of Latin and Etruscan cultures, was later on to impose her language on Italy and the Western Empire.

The name of the Ionians was adopted in the East for all Greeks: *Yauna* in Old Persian, *Yavana* in Sanskrit, and *Javan* as a son of Japheth in the Hebrew Pentateuch.

Ionian dialects were spoken in Euboea, in most of the Cyclades islands, and along the coast of South Asia Minor, from Halicarnassus<sup>1</sup> to Smyrna and Phocaea. There were also Ionian colonies from Chalkidike to the borders of the Hellespont, in Sicily and Italy, and even farther west at Massilia (Marseilles) and Agde in France.

The Ionians were the first Greeks to create a literary language not peculiar to a particular city. As navigators, merchants, and colonists they felt the value of a common language. Minor differences of local usage are indicated by inscriptions, but the written language tended to obscure these variations. In literature Ionic is represented by the chief linguistic element of the Homeric poems,<sup>2</sup> by Herodotus and other historians who followed him, and by numerous writers of the *iambic* metre.

<sup>1</sup> Formerly Dorian.

<sup>2</sup> The other main element in the Homeric epics was Aeolic. The theory that the epics were originally composed in the Aeolic dialect and then translated into Ionian is not now maintained. Ionian gained ground in Asia Minor, replacing Aeolic. The traditional text seems to have been evolved when the two types of dialect came into contact. There would be a tendency for later reciters to introduce Ionic forms unless they preferred the Aeolic for the effect, archaic or high-sounding.

The language of Herodotus, which may be regarded as an ennobled form of the dialect of Miletus,<sup>1</sup> became the standard language for prose writers, whether they were historians or philosophers like Parmenides, or physicians like Hippocrates.<sup>2</sup>

The iambic metre was developed by the Ionic writers, and was afterwards adopted for the drama in other dialects, especially in Attic. From the middle of the fourth century B.C. Ionic was gradually replaced by Attic, and ceased to be the leading dialect of the literary world.

The language of Attica was a variety of Ionian.<sup>3</sup>

The oldest form of Attic was doubtless nearer to the old Ionic of Asia Minor than was the earliest Attic recorded in inscriptions or literature. It does not follow that the original Attic dialect was identical with the dialect of the Ionic cities in Asia. The Athenians adopted the *iambic* metre from the Ionians and at the same time, it seems, many Ionic forms which sounded well in tragic verse but which were not survivals of old Attic. Comedy, as by Aristophanes, was written in pure Attic. The growth and dominance of Attic were results of the growth and dominance of Athens, and Attic formed, as we shall see, the basis of the *koinē*, or Greek common to all, of later days of which the great monument is the New Testament.

(b) *Arcadian*. A group of dialects, including the Arcadian of the central Peloponnese, Cypriot, and Pamphylian, represents a wave of Greek speech carried to the south-east as far as Cyprus. On the mainland its area has been much reduced by the Dorian invasion.

To this group probably belonged the dialect of the Achæan people. Achæa on the Gulf of Corinth kept the name but lost the language. None of these dialects developed any literature. The domination of the Achæans had passed away before literature had begun.

(c) *Æolic*. The Æolic group includes the Æolic of North Asia Minor, Thessalian, and Boeotian. Æolic has left its

<sup>1</sup> H. W. Smyth, *Greek Dialects. Ionic*, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> He was a native of Cos, a Doric-speaking island.

<sup>3</sup> Homer placed the Ionians in Attica—*Iliad*. xiii. 85.

mark in the language of the Homeric poems, but lost ground to Ionic. In Lesbos, however, of the sixth century B.C. arose the lyric writers, Alcaeus and Sappho.

Thessaly produced no literature. The Boeotian dialect was used by the poetess Corinna, but the much more famous poet Pindar, though born in Boeotia, did not use its dialect.

(d) *Doric*. The Dorians became the dominant people of the Peloponnese. They settled also in Crete, in southern Asia Minor, and in Sicily with the adjacent coasts of Italy. Some of their proper names recall those of Illyria, and there was a tradition of an invasion through Aetolia and Elis. On the other hand some evidence has suggested an invasion of the Peloponnese by sea from Crete.<sup>1</sup> By whatever movements they reached the positions they occupied in historical times, the Dorians were clearly a bellicose, uncultured people, who despised the Ionians as effeminate, and whom the Ionians despised as uncivilized. This racial prejudice underlay much of the bitterness of the Peloponnesian war.

In literature the most important contribution in Doric was the choral ode. This was developed by Aleman in the Laco-nian dialect, adopted by the Boeotians, and then by Attic tragedy in a Doric form. Aleman himself belonged to Sardis in Asia Minor, and several other Doric poets were imported from non-Dorian cities. In Sicily were some genuine Dorian writers, e.g. Archimedes, Epicharmus, and Theocritus.

Sicilian comedy served as a model for Athenian comedy.

The principal centre of this Sicilian literature was Syracuse, but the language of this city was not widely used by other Dorian communities.

## 6. *Hellenic Unity*

A special feature of Greek life was the exclusive independence of the city-states. This was reflected in the varieties of Greek speech. It has been said that in the sixth century B.C. there were as many Greek dialects as there were Greek cities. On the other hand, all the Greek cities were definitely conscious of sharing in a common civilization.

There was a sharp line between Greek and barbarian.

<sup>1</sup> The only place where Homer mentions them.

However much travellers might be impressed by the civilization of the Egyptians, or by the character of the Persians, it was felt to be vastly better to be a Greek.

This sense of the Greek unity was fostered by several institutions. There were the traditions of the ancestors of the tribes, though these concerned mainly the families of rulers, and not the whole population. There were records of colonies founded by parent cities. There were common cults, although Greek religion contained a great deal that had not been introduced by the Indo-European immigrants. Indeed, it might be conjectured that a sense of the unity of the Aegean area goes back to Minoan times. In Asia Minor there does not seem to have been such a sharp line between Greek and Lydian, Greek and Carian, as soon as Lydian and Carian began to speak Greek. What the Macedonian language was like we do not know. There is no reason to suppose it was Greek. The Macedonians, beginning with the royal house, adopted Attic as their language, but the world soon forgot that Alexander the Great and Philip his father were not Greeks by descent. The great test was Greek speech, for peculiar local cults could always be brought into line by identifying the deities honoured therein with some of the leading figures in the Greek pantheon. The final hall-mark of Greek nationality was admission to the Olympic Games. Correlated with this sense of Hellenic unity is the fact that the Greek dialects in the main, especially in their literary forms, were mutually intelligible. That is not to say that a Lakonian shepherd would at once understand the speech of a Boeotian farmer, or that either would be readily understood by a citizen of Athens or Miletus.

On the other hand, the men who went from city to city, and from island to island, could understand the language of all Greek ports. The various leagues that were formed from time to time were not handicapped by language difficulties, though it is true that the dominance of Athens for about half a century after the Persian wars did a great deal to promote the general use of Attic, or of a form of Greek more or less Atticized. With all the numberless local variations the total range of variation was not very great, especially

among those dialects which contributed to literature. The differences consist often only in the timbre of a vowel, as Ionian had  $\bar{e}$  for the original  $\bar{a}$ , whereas Attic retained or restored  $\bar{a}$  in certain positions; or in the exact form of an inflexion, or in  $-ss-$  for  $-tt-$ ,  $r$  for  $s$ ; or, more puzzling,  $t$  for  $p$ , and  $p$  for  $k$ . Thus, while Attic has  $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\tau\tau\alpha\rho\epsilon\varsigma$  for 'four', Ionian has  $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\sigma\epsilon\rho\epsilon\varsigma$  and Dorian  $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omicron\rho\epsilon\varsigma$ , but Bocotian has a more archaic form in  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\tau\tau\alpha\rho\epsilon\varsigma$  and Lesbian, changing  $-tt-$  to  $-ss-$  as in Ionian, has  $\pi\acute{\epsilon}\sigma\sigma\upsilon\rho\epsilon\varsigma$ .

The mutual intelligibility of the literary languages is obvious from the conventional use of particular dialects for certain types of literary work—Lesbian for elegies, Dorian for choral odes, and for a long time Ionian for serious prose. Moreover, almost every student who learns Greek begins with an Attic historian, followed probably by a tragedy in Attic iambs with an Ionian tinge and the chorus singing in Dorian. Then he will be promoted to Homer in Ionic+ Aeolic, to Herodotus in Ionic, and the New Testament in Hellenistic Greek.

Throughout Attic is his standard, but he is very conscious that all these forms are essentially forms of one language, and can readily accustom himself to the variations, though probably he can write only the one variety correctly. Indeed, there was always a tendency for all these dialects to become somewhat mixed, and for all of them to be influenced by the dominant literary language of the time, at first Ionian and then Attic. Again, all the poets are apt to be influenced by the language of the Homeric poems, which formed the basis of the Greek education. We may even go farther and say that, in Greek as in other languages, nearly all literature has been influenced by the mass of earlier literature. Moreover, as has been so often pointed out, much of the dialect literature is conventional—the Dorian odes in tragedy are largely Attic with  $\bar{e}$  changed into  $\bar{a}$ . No Sicilian shepherd ever talked the language of Theocritus.<sup>1</sup>

The more aberrant of the spoken dialects, like Pamphylian, played no part in literary life and eventually faded away

<sup>1</sup> For a brief description of the Greek dialects see P. Giles, *A Short Manual of Comparative Philology*, pp. 525-67.

before the *κοινή*, the language common to all Greeks, from which Modern Greek with its dialects is descended, with hardly any trace of the older dialects.

### 7. *Athens*

The dominance of Attic in literature and speech began with the dominance of Athens after the wars with the Persians, but continued after the downfall of the Athenian Empire. Athens was in a better position than any of the Greek cities to form a focus of resistance to the expansion of the Persian Empire. Cities in Asia Minor were exposed to the whole weight of attacks by land as well as being cut off by sea—and these attacks could be renewed at any time. Any of the islands could be taken singly and surprised by a hostile squadron before the alarm could be given and assistance organized. Athens had access to the sea but had her back to the mainland, while Sparta was hidden away among the mountains, and Corinth looked westward rather than to the east.

It was not merely her geographical position that brought Athens to the forefront. She owed much to her political development that brought into play all elements of the body politic, though eventually an excessive emphasis on freedom and equality contributed to her downfall.

The early history of Attica consists of a struggle to limit the power of the aristocracy, which ended in the despotism of Peisistratus and his sons (560–10 B.C.), and of the replacement of the despots by democrats. Under the tyrants Athens became an important trading power in the Aegean. The power of the aristocrats was curtailed and Athens developed a keen sense of patriotism.

At the beginning of the fifth century B.C. Athens supported the Ionians in Asia Minor against the Persians, and in 480 B.C. she increased her fleet, which was to become the means of beating back the Persian invaders and of dominating the islands. After the defeat of Xerxes Athens instituted the Delian league for the permanent defence of Hellas, the treasury of the league being kept in the sacred island of Delos. By the middle of the century, however, the treasury

was moved to Athens and the contributions became practically tribute to Athens. Athens expanded rapidly in power and wealth, defeating the neighbouring states of Corinth and Aegina. Her port at Piraeus was fortified and joined by the long Walls to Athens. Throughout the time when Pericles was in power, especially the last two decades of his life (443–429 B.C.), the Arts flourished, magnificent temples were built and craftsmen attracted from all over Hellas. Athens had developed tragedy with the three great tragedians Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Aristophanes eclipsed all other comedians.

Eventually the empire of Pericles aroused the hostility of many states against the ‘tyrant city’. Athens was the champion of democracy. It was easy to argue that there was no equality between Athens and her allies. It was, however, the oligarchic party, the old families deprived of their privileges, that were the real enemies of Athens. Then there was Sparta and the jealousy of the Dorians.

The Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.) ruined the Athenian Empire but it did not affect the position of Athens as the leader in literature and thought. Indeed it has been said that it was only after the loss of empire that Athens really became the school of Hellas that Pericles believed her to be in his own day.

The victorious Spartans had nothing to offer the world, while Athens continued to be the home of poets, philosophers, and rhetoricians. Socrates, Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle became great names for all Greece, the schools of Plato and Isocrates attracted pupils from every Greek city. In democratic Athens speech-writing became a profession, and the continual demand for public eloquence led to the perfecting of Attic prose far beyond what had been attained by the historians and scientists writing in Ionian. In the third century Alexandria took the lead in science and scholarship while Athens held her own in philosophy and comedy, but the language used in the Alexandrian schools was the Attic prose now recognized as the vehicle of Greek thought and culture. Even history, which followed so long the model of Herodotus, was now written in Attic.



8. *The 'Koinē'*

The Macedonians, Philip and his greater son Alexander, conquered Greece and then the East. The little city-states ceased to be of importance and Hellenism travelled far afield. There was a levelling up of local dialects, and Greek was spoken far beyond the Aegean area: in Egypt, Syria, and for a while in Bactria and the Punjab.

The general average Greek spoken by all cultivated people from about Alexander's time was called by the Greeks the *koinē*, i.e. the language *common* to all Greeks.<sup>1</sup> It was based mainly on Attic and Ionic. Its literary forms have frequently a tendency to Atticize, to be nearer the language of Attic literature and of the University of Athens than the language of ordinary speakers, as indicated by the writings of less cultivated people and most of the New Testament.

It is mainly from this *koinē* that modern Greek dialects are derived, not from the old dialects Aeolic, Doric, &c.

Thus we see that the original proto-Greek, wherever it was spoken, was broken up into the main dialect groups during the migrations and then into the local varieties used in individual cities. A certain sense of unity among the prosperous Ionian cities of Asia produced a common Ionian, which was long used for science and history. The phenomenal rise of Athens led to the general adoption of a more Attic way of speech, and of Attic as the language of literature and learning. Then the rise of the Macedonian power leads to the adoption of the *koinē*, more or less Attic, which becomes the Greek language of the Hellenistic period and changes very little, especially as written, for over twelve centuries. There were changes of pronunciation, with the development of local 'accents'; there were innovations in grammar. Gradually the gulf widened between ordinary spoken Greek and the book language, but it was the only important division. The old local dialects as of Sparta and Boeotia faded away with the political institutions they had served.

<sup>1</sup> Meillet has written (p. 176): 'La *κοινή* devient nécessaire quand l'hellénisme devient une civilisation.'

### 9. *Spread of Greek*

The growth of the Macedonian Empire was not the result of a long process of accretion and conquest like that of Rome. The old Greek world was overwhelmed in a few years by a whirlwind conqueror and the military genius of Alexander forced a way for Hellenism all through the Nearer East. Under his successors military command was followed by trade, by the arts, the Greek way of life, the Greek language, learning, and thought, in a word by Greek civilization, or, to distinguish this world movement from the older forms, by Hellenism. The use of Hellenistic Greek spread through the wide domains of Alexander's successors. It became the official language of Egypt, Asia Minor, Syria, and other countries, and held that position under the Roman Empire. Pontius Pilate spoke to the Jews not in Latin but in Greek. Roman civilians, like Cicero, had to learn Greek and use it for the administration of Eastern provinces. Yet in the long run Greek lost more ground than Latin, giving way to Aramaic in Asia Minor, and to other languages farther east.

Eventually Arabic and then Turkish drove Greek back to its ancient boundaries and even encroached on those.

Owing to the rapidity of the Macedonian conquest the details of its victories hardly concern us.

Philip II came to the throne in 359 B.C. and Alexander died in 323 B.C. Two-thirds of this period was used by Philip to consolidate his position in the north of Greece and to build up his army. So in barely thirteen years Alexander succeeds in dominating Hellas, and in conquering the decadent Persian Empire. Beyond those limits he had little success. He crossed the Hellespont 334 B.C. Darius was defeated at Issus in 333 B.C. and Syria was subdued in 332 B.C.; the same autumn followed the conquest of Egypt and the foundation of Alexandria. The victory of Gaugamela (331 B.C.) opened the way to Mesopotamia and the following winter saw the conqueror in Persia and Susiana. The next four years were spent in overrunning the eastern regions of the Persian Empire, and Alexander crossed the Indus in 326 B.C.; stopping at the Beas, he returned to Babylon where he died (323 B.C.).

Obviously this rapid progress through the dominions of the King of Kings could not change the languages of the subject peoples. It opened the way for Hellenism, and it was under Alexander's successors that the use of Greek really extended in the East.

The Greek used in these eastern countries was the *koinē*.

The Macedonians themselves had a doubtful claim to be called Greeks. Perhaps the royal house, which claimed descent from Achilles, the Homeric hero, had a better claim. Alexander I (490–454 B.C.) was admitted to the Olympic Games. Archelaus (413–400 B.C.) invited Euripides to his capital, and Attic became the language of the Court. By the time of Philip II all the nobles have Greek names. Aristotle, the great philosopher, was tutor to the young Alexander III, son of Philip. The conquerors had themselves learned Greek and carried it abroad with the enthusiasm of converts.

New centres of civilization were developed at Alexandria in Egypt, Pergamum in Mysia, and Antioch in Syria, which rivalled Athens with their libraries and learning. Greek came to be spoken by many foreigners, who retained also the use of their own languages. Except to a certain extent in Asia Minor, where some of the old non-Greek languages like Carian were dwindling, Greek did not displace the languages of the country, but a knowledge of the *Koinē* radiated from the larger towns.

In Egypt the Ptolemies, a Macedonian dynasty, ruled for three centuries; literature and learning were encouraged at the Alexandrian court, especially under Ptolemy II, who has been compared to Louis XIV of France.

The language of administration was Greek, and doubtless more or less of it was known to many of the traders in the bazaars, but in the fields the peasants spoke mainly Egyptian.

At the same time farm lands were allotted to soldiers of the Ptolemies' armies, many of whom were of Greek descent.

These Greek-speaking colonies were dotted about the country.

Before Egypt became a Roman province, Greek was too well established to be replaced by Latin.

In Asia, after some quarrels among the Macedonian Generals, Seleucus established a dynasty which lasted from 312 to 65 B.C. His first capital was Babylon, and then he founded the important city of Antioch. Later on Antioch was found to be too far west and the Seleucid government was centred at Seleucia on the Tigris. The boundaries of this vast Greek Empire of the East varied with the fortunes of war and the accidents of rebellion. At its greatest the Seleucid dominion stretched from the Punjab to Palestine, occupying the whole area of the Persian Empire, with the exceptions of Egypt under the Ptolemies and the north of Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup>

This vast area could not be so closely sown with Greek colonies as Egypt or Asia Minor. The Greeks and Macedonians settled in towns along the main routes and in the more fertile lands. There is no evidence of any displacement of Oriental languages by Greek, except as the language of the rulers and their army and as the second language of those people in the towns who cultivated the Greek arts and literature.

On the other hand another language, Aramaic, extensively used by the scribes of the Persian Empire for ordinary purposes, was spreading continuously and displacing some of the older languages. By the end of the Greek period Aramaic had become the common language of the Nearer East.

### 10. *Greek in the Punjab*

The garrisons left by Alexander in the Punjab were massacred soon after the conqueror's departure. When Seleucus was established in Babylon, but embarrassed on the west of his dominions, he transferred to Candragupta Maurya, the great ruler of Magadha,<sup>2</sup> two of the Persian satrapies corresponding to the districts of modern Kandahar and Kabul, with parts of Baluchistan and Herat.

During the dominance of the Mauryan Empire, friendly relations<sup>3</sup> were maintained between the two empires and the

<sup>1</sup> Antiochus I Soter (323-262 B.C.), who was half Persian, defeated an invasion of Gauls into Asia Minor. These people ultimately settled in Galatia, but lost their language.

<sup>2</sup> His capital was at Pataliputra, near the modern Patna.

<sup>3</sup> There is the famous story of Bindusāra asking, among other things, for

Greeks made no encroachments. Indian goods were exported to the west and Asoka sent a missionary to endeavour to convert the Greeks to Buddhism. When, however, the Mauryan Empire declined, the passes were again open to invaders.

In the meantime events had taken a curious turn in Parthia and Bactria. Bactria, corresponding to northern Afghanistan (from the Paropamisus range to the Oxus), and Sogdiana beyond the Oxus formed the extreme north-west extension of the Persian Empire. The subjugation of this region had given Alexander a good deal of trouble and the fertile lands of Bactria were strewn with Greek colonies. In the towns Hellenism flourished. The arts were cultivated, theatres built, and Greek plays were performed. About the middle of the third century B.C. two things happened. Parthia revolted under the nomad Arsaces and swept away the Hellenistic civilization, and Diodotus, Governor of 1,000 cities of Bactria, rebelled and proclaimed himself king. The success of Parthia, which continued to gain ground during the next century, inserted a wedge between the Greeks in Bactria and the Seleucid dominions.

Threatened by the Parthians on the west and by other nomadic tribes from Central Asia, the Greeks turned their eyes to the south, Kabul, and the Punjab, left open to attack by the weakening of the Mauryan Empire. 'Maharaja' Demetrius (c. 190–160 B.C.) invaded India, made himself master of the Indus valley, and minted coins with bilingual inscriptions, Greek and Prākṛit in Kharoshti characters. In the meantime his original country revolted. This may not have greatly troubled the Maharaja, for the rebel Eucratides lost ground to the Parthians, and not long afterwards Saka tribes, displaced by the Yueh Chih (themselves pushed along by the Huns), drove all the Greeks out of Bactria.

A later Greek king who made some impression on Indian tradition was Menander, who ruled at Sialkot. Many of these Greek kings (and two queens) in the Punjab and in Afghanistan are only names to us, with perhaps a portrait on their

a sophist to teach him to argue, and being informed that sophists were not for sale. Megasthenes went as ambassador from the Seleucid court to Patna.

coins. The last of them was Hermaeus in the Upper Kabul valley about 40 B.C.

Scrappy as the information is and for the most part completely ignored by Indian literature, it is clear that a considerable part of the Punjab was ruled by Greek kings for nearly a century.<sup>1</sup>

To what extent Greek was spoken, or to what extent the Greeks learnt Prākṛit, we can only guess. The coins were bilingual. Heliodorus, an ambassador from the Greek king of Taxila to the king of Vidisa (Bhilsa in Central India), was a follower of Vishnu, as his inscription in Prākṛit testifies. So it appears that these Greeks, isolated from the main stream of Hellenism, were on the way to becoming Hinduized and not in a position to impress their language on any but their closest associates.

## 11

Later on we shall have to say something of the later fortunes of the Greek language in the eastern half of the Roman Empire, and then in Byzantium and the Eastern Empire. Greek became the language of one of the important Christian churches and absorbed many tribes of Slavonic blood, influencing others, but from the time of the Macedonian Empire Greek produced no more literature of the first rank.

Greek became a world language, but added little to what had already been achieved. There was some philosophy and history at Alexandria, and an infinity of theology at Byzantium, but the Greek literature that has interested the world and tempted the student to learn the language belongs to the older period which ends with Alexander.

<sup>1</sup> See *Cambridge History of India*, vol. i, chaps. xvii and xxii.

## CHAPTER VI

### ANCIENT ITALY

#### 1. *Italy a Definite Geographical Unit*

THE Italian peninsula forms a distinct geographical unit, which any one unacquainted with its history might expect to be the home of a single race speaking a common language.

The northern plains of Piedmont, Lombardy, and Venetia are separated from the rest of Europe by the Alps. The chain of the Apennines running down through the peninsula is jointed by numerous valleys and passes, and nowhere seems to offer a serious obstacle to the movements of herdsmen or cultivators.

There might be some doubt as to the inclusion of the larger islands. If Sicily appears to be a natural appendage of Italy, as geologically it is, the island also forms a central point for navigators of the Mediterranean. Corsica is not so obviously attached and is now politically distinct. Sardinia is farther out to sea.

It is also true that in the north it would be difficult to draw an exact boundary-line following geographical features. To the west of the northern plain one might follow the crests of the Maritime Alps and so on to Mont Blanc, tracing a line that would approximate to the actual Franco-Italian frontier. Exactly where this line would cut the sea-board would not be obvious *a priori*, and in fact there has been some oscillation. Mentone is now a French town with an Italian name and Nice was once inside the Italian frontier.

Going farther east from Mont Blanc along the crests of the Pennine Alps to the Simplon Massif and stopping short of the famous Pass of Saint Gothard, we find the high peaks marking the line of the Swiss frontier. From this point we might expect the line to run nearly due east and to cut off from modern Switzerland the crinkly V, which includes Locarno, Lugano, the northern end of Lake Maggiore, and the little valleys of the Moggia, which penetrates to the plain near

Como. In fact, however, Swiss boundaries do not always follow obvious geographical lines, nor indeed do they coincide with linguistic boundaries.<sup>1</sup>

The farther east we go, the harder it becomes to find a clear-cut limit, a fact that has been reflected in the struggles of modern Italy with her neighbours and in all the woful history of 'Italia Irredenta'.<sup>2</sup>

If we follow the foothills, excluding the Alps of Bergamo, the Trentino, the Dolomites, and perhaps both the Venetian and Julian Alps, our line would run south-east somewhere between Gorizia and Laibach, ending near Fiume. This would give Italy Gorizia, Trieste, and Istria with Pola, but it would cut off many Italian villages, whose inhabitants have penetrated into the lower hills.<sup>3</sup>

If, on the other hand, we continue the line along the high Alpine peaks past the Brenner Pass to Venediger and the Great Glockner, we run along the Nieder Tauern into the heart of Austria. The upper reaches of the 'Etsch' may be Germanic (owing to the infiltration of Germans across the watershed), but the waters of the Etsch run into the Adige and become pure Italian. Carinthia, on the other hand, drains to the east and never was a part of Italy.

At this eastern extremity the line of the watershed might serve, but there could be no question of including any of the Adriatic coast beyond Fiume.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from the islands and the details of a complex mountain frontier, it remains true that Italy is a distinct geographical unit.

Italy is to-day a unified kingdom and apart from minor variations in its dialects employs one common language, modern Italian. Every student knows that in the ancient

<sup>1</sup> Many place-names in this very V are Italian, so are the country dialects.

<sup>2</sup> Since the Great War the pendulum has swung the other way, and German-speaking peasants must have Italian even on their tombstones.

<sup>3</sup> The Roman frontier did not leave the plain until the second century B.C. Even under the Empire certain Alpine regions were not included in Italy for administrative purposes. *Vide* pp. 126, 144.

<sup>4</sup> In Roman times there were close relations by sea between cities on the two sides of the Adriatic, but Dalmatia was in Illyria, not in Italy. The Republic of Venice, a sea-power, dominated towns on the Dalmatian coast, but these were not Italian.



days of the Roman Republic and of the Early Roman Empire Italy was the home country of the capital city, and that the common language was Latin, from which Italian is derived. From these facts one might be tempted to conclude that the peninsula had been inhabited since remote ages by the same people, always speaking some form of the Latin language; we might even become eloquent in describing the antiquity, purity, and special qualities of the 'Latin race'. A closer investigation into the history of Ancient Italy will show the falsity of such notions. The Italian people, like most other peoples, is an amalgam of diverse elements. Latin was the one language (only slightly mixed) which survived out of several. The 'Latin race' is a myth invented by poets and fostered by politicians.

## *2. Background of Italian History*

The detailed history of Ancient Italy may be said to begin in the fourth century B.C. Very little is certain before the sack of Rome by the Gauls in 390 B.C. when nearly all the documents existing in that city were destroyed. The circumstantial stories of the founding of Rome and of the reigns of the kings were reconstructed afterwards, and it is a very difficult critical problem to extract what may be true from the mass of legend and confused popular tradition moulded by national vanity and family pride. The Latin historians have worked up an orderly and fairly plausible story out of this material, an imposing façade, but they make no secret of the weakness of its foundations.

For the earlier periods, where Roman history fails us or furnishes very dubious evidence, we must depend upon archaeology and the allied sciences, which have enabled scholars to sketch the outline of the pre-history and proto-history of Italy; an outline which becomes more definite as well as richer in detail year by year. With the earliest ages of which traces are found we are not concerned. The rough implements of the Old Stone Age are found from Liguria to Sicily. Palaeolithic man, still in the nomadic stage, lodging temporarily in caves and living by hunting, fishing, and gathering wild fruits, wandered over Italy for thousands of

years. Eventually he was replaced by Neolithic man, with his polished stone tools, domestic animals, and villages of round huts.

Whether the Old Stone Man was exterminated or reduced to slavery is a disputed point. On either view it would be useless to speculate about the nature of the language spoken by the Palaeolithic hunters.

The New Stone Age slides into the Copper, Bronze, and Iron ages, without any such apparent break as that between the Palaeolithic and Neolithic cultures. It is generally supposed that in Italy, as elsewhere, descendants of the Neolithic people form an element in the existing population. The round or oval hut sunk deep into the ground with a hearth dug out in the centre remained the regular type in ancient Italy, and still appears as a survival in the cabins of the Roman *campagna*.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of the Neolithic period gold and copper make their appearance. At first copper was used sparingly side by side with stone implements. This period has accordingly been named *Chalcolithic*. Remains of the period have been found scattered all over Italy.

About 1800–1600 B.C. copper is alloyed with tin and the *Bronze Age* begins. Villages are built on piles, either on land where floods are feared or on the edges of lakes. Larger groups live together. We may say that the clan has been evolved.

About 1000 B.C. begins the *Iron Age*.

There are several groups of remains with local variations. The most developed is the civilization of Villanova. Tombs are built in the form of wells. Bodies were cremated, and the ashes kept in ossuaries with covers. In Venetia, from the Delta of the Po to Istria, was developed a separate civilization which diverged from the Villanova type. In the south the dead were buried.

Eventually, somewhere about the eighth or seventh centuries B.C. the Etruscans and Greeks appear on the scene.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Homo, *L'Italie primitive*. In Sicily there are traces of the influence of the Pre-Minoan art of Crete.

<sup>2</sup> The oldest Etruscan walls date from the eighth or early seventh century. The Etruscan tombs contain many objects of eastern origin imported or copied.

The Etruscans are now generally believed to have come from Asia Minor, but their alphabet was a modified form of a Greek alphabet derived from Cumae, a Greek colony founded at the end of the ninth or beginning of the eighth century.

To these general indications of archaeology we have now to add the evidence of the traces of languages surviving up to the dawn of history and to inquire how far each particular language can be associated with particular remains.

### 3. *Ethnic and Linguistic Map of the Seventh Century B.C.*

From a large number of indications furnished by tradition, the statements of historians, and the study of place-names, it is possible to draw an ethnic map of the Italy of the seventh century B.C. the broad outlines of which appear to be well established. Such information as we have about the languages of the various peoples and tribes that figure on that map furnishes some indication of their connexion with each other and of great differences between them.

The language of the Etruscans, doubtless the dominant element of the population, differed *toto coelo* from the various *Italic* dialects and tribes along the Apennine range. Other late-comers easily distinguished were the Greek colonists on the coasts of Sicily and South Italy.

There are good reasons for believing that the Veneti, inhabitants of Venetia in the north-east corner, whose name survives in that of Venice, afterwards the Queen of the Adriatic, were immigrants from Illyria, displaced perhaps by the Dorian invasions of Greece. From the same source seem to have come the Iapyges who settled in the 'heel of the boot'.

At this period the name Italia (Oscan from Viteliū or Viteliu)<sup>1</sup> is applied only to the 'toe of the boot', the southern part of Bruttium.

The term *Italic* used above is a linguistic label by which it is convenient to group together a large number of tribes speaking related dialects including Oscan, Umbrian, and Latin.

The classification of these *Italic* languages may very well

<sup>1</sup> The derivation is disputed: from a tribe 'Vitali' or, with reference to pastoral occupations, from *vitulus*, a calf.

correspond to the mutual connexions of the tribes (or at least of the dominant element in each), but it would be a very difficult task to determine whence and at what time these tribes arrived at their destination.

Still more difficult is the question of the relationship of these various ethnic elements and the different strata of archaeological remains.

The Etruscan remains are characteristic, so is the art of the Greek colonists. But which of the tribes on our seventh-century map should we connect with the Neolithic villages of round huts, with the agriculturists of the Copper Age, with the bronze-using clans in dwellings built on piles, with the iron-using race of Villanova which burnt its dead and preserved the ashes in an ossuary, or with other contemporary groups throughout the peninsula, some of which continued to bury their dead?

It will be sufficient for our purposes to indicate the trend of opinion with regard to these questions in their broad outlines.

The coast below the Maritime Alps, the modern Riviera, was known as Liguria, the home of the Ligures. The region had been inhabited from Palaeolithic times, as is shown by the skulls, &c., found in caves.

Of the language of the Ligures only a few fragments remain, hardly sufficient to determine whether or no it belonged to the Indo-European family. Some authorities believe that it did, connecting the Ligures with the Neolithic people of Italy to whom they assign a language of the same family.

‘In reality,’ says the author of *L'Italie primitive*, ‘the Ligurians seem to have been neither a people nor a race; they represent a political and social state, the civilization of the neolithic period, the result of a long evolution in the course of which ethnic elements of very different origin and character were gradually welded together.’<sup>1</sup>

That may well be, but there is nothing to show which ethnic element introduced an Indo-European language, or when. That there were non-Aryan languages in the Mediterranean basin before the Aryan-speaking tribes arrived can hardly be doubted.

<sup>1</sup> *L'Italie primitive*, p. 45.

The Greek and Latin words for 'wine' and 'olive' are not Aryan.<sup>1</sup> Traces of non-Aryan language have been detected in the Iberian peninsula, and in Celtic languages of the West. Doubtless if we could go far enough back we should find a non-Aryan language in Liguria. That this was affected by Aryan dialects soon after their arrival in Italy is quite possible, but to what extent the old language had been modified, or superseded by Aryan invaders before the stream of Latin speech arrived, we do not know.

If, however, it had been superseded by a Celtic or Italic dialect, we should hardly have been conscious of a Ligurian problem. In any case what happened in Liguria does not necessarily solve the problem of the population of Ancient Italy.

Speakers of Italic languages came in from the north. Very probably they were the people who used iron and practised cremation, preserving the ashes. It may be that bronze was introduced by the dwellers in pile-built villages, who also practised cremation, and that these people were the advance guard of the Aryan swarms which followed some centuries later. Granting that this was so, we must remember the existence of the older human strata, Palaeolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic.

We cannot assume that all the older inhabitants were exterminated by the new-comers, or that some Indo-European speech was the first language to be heard in Italy.

There is indeed a theory according to which the Neolithic people of Italy would have spoken an Indo-European language even before the arrival of the proto-Italic dialects.

According to this view the common language of a large group of tribes living in the north of Europe, the Baltic lowlands, and Scandinavia, spread over a large area of central and western Europe. This language was what we call Indo-European,<sup>2</sup> and was spread by a dominant minority over Germany, Britain, France, Spain, and Italy. Some writers

<sup>1</sup> Meillet, *Aperçu d'une histoire de la langue grecque*, p. 43. See previous chapter.

<sup>2</sup> The parent language of the Indian, Iranian, Armenian, Hellenic, Italic, Celtic, Germanic, and Balto-Slavonic sub-families.

speak even of a 'European State', the first European Empire.<sup>1</sup> This could only have happened in the Neolithic times, and (presumably) in the last subdivision of that period, in the Chalcolithic age of copper and agriculture.

Thus the Neolithic people of Italy are to be identified with the Ligures, both being included in the 'vast European empire of the West'. In the first half of the second millennium, about the time when bronze appears in Italy, this European Empire is supposed to have broken up, resulting in new migrations.

For a while, however, a group of tribes speaking an Indo-European dialect (though, on this theory, of mixed racial elements) continued to live somewhere in central Europe. This people is associated with the civilization of Aunetitz (Bohemia and Silesia) and the *tumuli* culture of western Germany, both being dated between 2000 and 1500 B.C.

The common language assigned to this people is *Italo-Celtic*, that is, the language assumed to have formed an intermediate stage between the old Indo-European language and the closely related Italic and Celtic groups. Later on successive swarms left the Italo-Celtic hive and crossed the mountains into the plains of Lombardy and eventually carried the Italic type of speech along the whole length of the Apennines. The Umbrians were the last to arrive. They settled in the north, and their speech is considered to be the nearest to the Celtic languages. Thus, according to this conception, the language of one part of the Indo-European area was carried (in different dialects) over another portion of that area, somewhat in the same way that Latin, the language of one part of the Italic area, was carried over the whole of the Italic area, and subsequently over most of the Celtic area.

If, in modern times, the expansion of French had affected not merely international communications, but had been strong enough to overlay and supersede other languages derived from Latin, we should have had another parallel in the same area. This is not the place for a detailed discussion of this theory, which is not free from difficulties.

It is possible that the Italic speakers were not the first

<sup>1</sup> Homo, *L'Italie primitive*, p. 58, quotes C. Jullian, Meillet, Peet.

Indo-Europeans to arrive, but as any earlier arrivals failed to establish their language it remains equally likely that they were fewer in numbers than their successors and that they merged with the earlier inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> The Ligurians may have been descended from such earlier arrivals, more or less mixed with alien stocks.

In either way the Italic languages were not the first in the peninsula, nor were they the only languages spoken at the dawn of Italian history. In the middle of the seventh century B.C. the distribution of peoples in the peninsula was already much the same as we find it just before the unification under Rome at the end of the fourth century, except that the Gauls had not yet crossed the Alps. Distinct from Italic peoples we have

- (i) Ligurians—on the Riviera and up to the Arno,
- (ii) Etruscans—between the Arno and Tiber,
- (iii) Veneti—in the north-east corner,
- (iv) Iapyges—‘in the heel of the boot’,<sup>2</sup>
- (v) Greeks—on the Sicilian and South Italian coasts, and
- (vi) in Sicily—Siculi, Sicani, and Phoenicians.

Of the Ligurian language (whether Indo-European or not) almost nothing remains.

The language of the Veneti, the Iapyges, and the Siculi is represented by a few obscure inscriptions. There is more material in Etruscan, the language of Etruria, of which we shall have more to say farther on. The Greek colonies introduced dialects of more than one group.<sup>3</sup> In the long run all these languages disappeared from Italy.

<sup>1</sup> (i) We have seen something similar in the waves of the Semitic and Indo-European languages following each other in the Nearer East.  
 (ii) On the other hand the earliest of these waves and the most far-reaching encountered and overlaid strata of other linguistic families.  
 (iii) We cannot suppose the first Indo-European speaking immigrants to have been the earliest Neolithic inhabitants of Italy, unless we push back the date of the ‘European Empire’ to a very remote past. So whoever was the first Indo-European to come must have found alien inhabitants in Italy as the Aryans found them in India.

<sup>2</sup> Daunians, Daunians, Messapians.

<sup>3</sup> *Chalcidian*: Cumae, Naples, &c.; *Dorian*: Tarentum, Syracuse, Heracleum, Agrigentum; *Achaean*: Croton, Metapontum; *Ionian*: Elea, Thurii.

The dialects of the Italic tribes belonged to three groups represented by the following languages:

Umbrian.

Oscan.<sup>1</sup>

Latin.

The first two are nearer to each other than they are to Latin.

At this period then (mid-seventh century B.C.) the great variety of dialects in use reflects more or less the complexity of the ethnic map and there is nothing to show which language is likely to prevail as the common language of the peninsula. We might expect the superior culture of the Greeks to prevail in the south—the Etruscans or the Umbrians might dominate the north. It would be anticipating the sea-power of Venice and Genoa to expect the Veneti or the Ligures to dominate the peninsula. We should hardly choose the Latins, though indeed they possessed a navigable river mid-way between the two intrusive civilizations—Greek and Etruscan.

#### 4. *Greeks in Italy*

In the seventh and sixth centuries, the Greeks seemed to be consolidating their hold on Sicily and South Italy. Cumae (a Chalcidian colony) dates from the end of the ninth or beginning of the eighth century. This was the first point at which a Greek alphabet was introduced, and from here it passed to the Etruscans. In the eighth century the Dorians founded Syracuse and Tarentum. After these came numerous other colonists. All along the coast, from Cumae to Tarentum, Greek cities multiplied, as they did also along the coast of Sicily, and became so prosperous that this region gained the name of Magna Graecia.

The Greek influence indeed extended farther west, and Massilia (Marseilles) was founded about the beginning of the sixth century by the Phocaeans.<sup>2</sup> Later on, after Ionia had fallen to Persia (545 B.C.), the Phocaeans migrated *en masse*, reinforcing Massilia and founding Alalia in Corsica.

<sup>1</sup> Oscan was still spoken in Campania in the first century A.D. Of the gradual disappearance of the Umbrian dialects there is no record.

<sup>2</sup> That is the Greek city. There were earlier settlers.



There could be no comparison between the culture of the Greek colonists and the primitive civilization which they found in the south of Italy.

For an account of Magna Graccia we may refer to Homo in *L'Italie primitive* (p. 74):

'There was no difficulty in taking possession of the littoral; the populations which the Greeks found in front of them were rude, but valiant and bellicose. They had, however, to bow before the material and moral superiority of the new-comers. Some were reduced to slavery and Hellenized, others were driven away from the coast and forced back into the mountains of the interior. By their agriculture, by their commerce overseas with the East, with the cities of the Motherland, with Carthage and Etruria, and overland with the neighbouring peoples of Italy, the Greek colonies lost no time in becoming powerful and in acquiring great wealth; the opulence of Sybaris<sup>1</sup> soon became proverbial. The intellectual and artistic development reached its apogee from the sixth century. Locri was to have the lyric poet Stesichorus, Rhegium to have Ibycus and Hippys, the earliest of the Greek historians of Italy, Velia was to become the home of intense philosophic speculation with Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Zeno; Croton and Metapontum were to become the principal centres of Pythagoreanism.'

It was from the Greeks that all the other peoples of Italy, directly or indirectly, learned to write. And yet the Greek language has entirely disappeared from the peninsula.

This fact belongs to the history of Greek, in which the same phenomenon occurs elsewhere.

The Greek colonial cities depended for their prosperity on communications by sea. They never really absorbed the tribes inland; their inland frontier was ill-defined and ill-defended. Whenever they lost control of the sea, they were at the mercy of any organized attack from the interior. All Greek colonies have been children of Poseidon; when the sea-god deserted them, they were lost.

The Greek dominance of the western Mediterranean was challenged in the sixth century by the allied fleets of Carthage and Etruria. Towards the end of the century the Etruscans were cheek by jowl with the old Greek city of

<sup>1</sup> A Sybarite—a voluptuary.

Cumae, and though the Etruscans appear to have been defeated at Aricia, the development of Hellenism in Italy was definitely checked. Later on the new power of Rome was to smite them by land and sea, and even before that many of them fell before the attacks of Sabellian tribes from the highlands.

### 5. *Etruria*

The great rivals of the Greeks during the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. as civilizers and still more as unifiers of Italy were the Etruscans.

It is only in recent years that the extent of the Etruscan Empire and the qualities of Etruscan civilization have been revealed by archaeological research. The origins of this people have been much discussed. Their language, in which there are more than a thousand inscriptions, is imperfectly understood. Many attempts to connect it with other languages have proved futile. It appears, however, that an inscription at Lemnos is written in a pre-Hellenic language closely related to Etruscan, and resemblances are traced between Etruscan and the language of certain Lydian inscriptions. This evidence, as far as it goes, tends to confirm the theory, very probable from other points of view, that the Etruscans were of Oriental origin, having come by sea from Asia Minor, as indeed Herodotus (vii. 170. 3) says they did. Among the 'peoples of the sea' who invaded Egypt in the thirteenth century B.C. were the *Tur-sha*, who are identified with the Tyrseni or Etruscans.<sup>1</sup>

Somewhere about 1000 B.C. the Etruscans established themselves on the seaboard of Tuscany. There are Etruscan tombs which have been dated in the tenth century. It is not improbable that the movement was one result of the disturbance caused by the Dorian invasions. How numerous these invaders were, whether they came all at once or like the Phocaeans to Gaul in successive instalments, we cannot tell.

<sup>1</sup> The Etruscans were good sailors and expert pirates. This trait, as Homo remarks, is not suggestive of an origin in central Europe as maintained by some authorities.

By about 700 B.C. they had occupied all Etruria proper and a large part of Umbria.

It is natural to suppose that in this wide area the Etruscans formed only a small dominant minority, controlling the ancient 'Ligurians' and Italic masses of the population. This disproportion must have been the more marked when the Etruscans had spread over a much wider area. The numerical inferiority of the Etruscans, as well as the alien character of their language, would form serious obstacles to the wide spread of Etruscan. Whether the Umbrians, who were conquered by the Etruscans and lived for a long time under their hegemony, ever learned the foreign tongue, we have no grounds for guessing.

It is more probable that the Etruscans, a sea-faring race and adept traders, learned enough of the Italic dialects for their purposes. If so, this would help to account for the fact that the official language of so wide an area has completely disappeared, without leaving any descendants, even in out-of-the-way corners, and also for the comparative ease with which Rome was able to absorb the whole Etruscan Empire. Had the masses become so Tuscan as to drop their Umbrian dialects, they would have felt the Latins to be alien to themselves, and the resistance would have been greater.

The expansion of Etruria towards the south began about the middle of the seventh century B.C. *Latium was completely overrun*. In the second half of the seventh century and during the sixth century there were Etruscan kings in Rome. These were represented in the legendary history of Rome as Tarquin, Servius Tullius, and Tarquin the Proud (Tarchu, Mastarna).

'Rome' is the Etruscan name of a city on the river 'Rume' (Latin, *Tiber*) which occupied the site of a small federation of Latin villages, a kind of advance post to watch the Tuscan aggressor across the Tiber. This same settlement, organized as a town and fortified by the Etruscans, became the advance base of Etruria for further expansion to the south, the meeting-point of Greek and Etrurian civilizations, the capital of the Etrurian Empire, and a trading-centre of great importance. Connected with the sea by a navigable river, which protected

the city from sudden raids by sea,<sup>1</sup> Etrurian Rome had commercial relations with many Greek cities, and with Carthage her great ally on the African coast.

The power of Carthage was growing rapidly about the middle of the sixth century.

The new dynasty of Babylon had been suppressing Phoenician cities and Tyre fell in 574 B.C.

This led to the reinforcement of the Phoenician settlements in the west, and especially to the aggrandizement of Carthage. Etruria formed an alliance with Carthage to resist the growing power of the Greeks, themselves strengthened by new arrivals from Ionia, which fell under the sway of Persia (545 B.C.).

By this arrangement Sardinia, Spain, and Sicily were assigned to the Punic sphere, and Corsica to the Tuscan.<sup>2</sup>

After Latium (with Rome) the Etruscans had occupied Campania somewhere about 600 B.C.

The tide of Tuscan invasion flowed up to and beyond some of the Greek cities on the coast as far as the River Silarus (Salerno).

By the end of the sixth century the Greek settlements north of the Volturno had been destroyed, including one as far north as Pisa.

The history of the west coast of Italy at this period illustrates the age-long rivalry of Asianic races and of the Greeks to control the Mediterranean, and the untenable position of the sea-board cities with no hinterland, when they had lost command of the sea.

To the last third of the sixth century belongs the further expansion of Etruria to the north, which included the valley of the Po. This territory was taken from the Umbrians, who had overrun or displaced the Neolithic 'Ligures' several centuries before.

'To the native races', writes Homo,<sup>3</sup> 'which she neither stifled nor exterminated, but which she was content to overlay, Etruria brought two things: her political institutions,

<sup>1</sup> Compare London and Paris.

<sup>2</sup> The Phocaeans left after the Battle of Alalia, 535 B.C.

<sup>3</sup> *L'Italie primitive*, p. 130.

and her civilization.' That is to say that she brought the city and the system of federation—building in stone, fortifications, draining of marshes, clearing of forests, dikes, and canals.

Havell<sup>1</sup> writes: 'Marshes were drained, strong fortified cities connected by well-kept roads were founded, and mining, agriculture, pottery, and woollen industries brought great wealth into the country. The painted vases of Etruria rivalled those of Greece, and her workers in metal produced masterpieces which still form the chief ornaments of many a collection.' To the Etruscans Havell ascribes the sombre, gloomy element of the Roman character—augury and the origin of gladiatorial shows from self-immolation at a great man's funeral; also the insignia of royalty, including the famous *fascēs*.

Thus we find the greater part of Italy unified under one people exercising a military and commercial hegemony. The civilization, at least the material civilization, of this people was far in advance of that attained by any of the other races in Italy, excepting the Greeks, who introduced their arts, the city-state, and the alphabet. Then suddenly (509 B.C.) there comes a check. Rome falls into the hands of the Latins, the Etruscan Empire is cut in two and soon crumbles before the encroachments of the Great City, of the Greeks, and of the Gauls.

The details of the 'Revolution' of 509 B.C. are obscure and probably distorted in the legendary history of Rome, but clearly this movement was the turning-point in the fortunes of Etruria and was associated not only with the hostility of the Greeks but also, and this is more important, with some kind of national movement among the Italic tribes.

The Etruscans had been several centuries in the country, and they were a small minority. They had grown wealthy by commerce, and doubtless luxury had sapped their military powers. Living in cities, and speaking an alien language, they seem to have had no organic hold on the peoples who fell under their sway.

Great builders and organizers of public works, they blocked out the foundations of a great state, but they seem to have lacked something that was needed to make that state a living

<sup>1</sup> Havell, *Republican Rome*, 1914, p. 33.

thing. Exactly what was lacking is a matter of conjecture, for the authentic information is very scanty.<sup>1</sup>

It may have been moral force that was lacking or it may have been that the city-bred Etruscan was unable to understand or inspire the Italian farmer and cattle-breeder. In any case it is clear that the Etruscan lords were unable to impose their language on their subjects. That being so, they were in the long run faced by the inevitable choice of all such conquerors, either to abandon their own language, as the Northmen did in Normandy, or to lose their dominions, as the English did in France.

The details of the decline of Etruria between 500 and 350 B.C. do not concern us. The loss of Latium cut off the land communication of Campania with the north, and the naval defeat inflicted by the Greeks of Syracuse (474 B.C.) isolated this region from Etruria, exposing it to the attacks of the Sabellian tribes, especially of the Samnites.

After the fall of Capua (c. 430 B.C.) the Tuscan people in Campania was broken up and absorbed. At the same time a new enemy had appeared in the north. The Gauls began crossing the Alps at the end of the fifth century. Various Celtic tribes occupied the great plain drained by the river Po. South of the Po more resistance was offered by the Etruscan cities—Felsina held on to the middle of the fourth century. The last to be absorbed were the settlements on the Adriatic.

Early in the fifth century Rome occupied South Etruria, and between the Gauls in the north and the growing power of Rome the Etruscan rule was doomed. A certain number emigrated to Rhaetia, where they retained for some time their independence and characteristic culture.<sup>2</sup>

From 350 B.C. Etruria ceases to be of serious importance.

### 6. *Expansion of Latin*

We have seen that in the course of events neither Greek nor Etruscan was to become the dominant language of Italy, and we have caught glimpses of the underlying causes that made it impossible for either of these languages to prevail.

<sup>1</sup> Weakness of the federal bond, lack of patriotism, rise of democrats. (Homo, p. 193.)

<sup>2</sup> Whence the theory of their continental origin.

This, however, by no means makes it obvious why the language of one corner of Latium, of the city of Rome, in fact, should succeed in establishing itself all over Italy, and eventually all over the Western Empire. As we have seen, the languages of masses of Italiots such as Oscan and Umbrian were very different from Latin. The spread of Latin which follows the expansion of the power of Rome is not fully explained by the catalogue of military conquests; nor was it due entirely to the commerce for which conquest opened up the way. The conquests of Etruria, the commerce of Etruria, the arts and engineering skill of Etruria had failed to impose the Etruscan language on North Italy. Over and above these things Latin possessed two great advantages.

One was the systematic and progressive unification and Romanization that was an essential feature of Roman policy, the other was the inherent superiority of Latin, as a means of communication between civilized people, in comparison with any other language spoken in Ancient Italy except Greek. This is not to say that the dialect of the earliest Italic settlers on the hills of Rome was already superior to all the other Italic dialects scattered up and down the peninsula. When Rome claimed the hegemony of Latium and then of Italy, her language had been moulded by the life of a dominant city, the centre of a wide trade, and clarified by contact with the languages of more civilized peoples, the Greeks and Etruscans.

Rome had traditions, conscious and unconscious, that none of the country towns or village leagues could boast of. The instrument and expression of that Roman life and culture was the Latin language.

To trace, however briefly, the external aspect of the growth and expansion of Latin is to follow from a particular point of view the history of Rome. The main stages in that history are:

Primitive Rome up to the Etruscan conquest.

Etruscan Rome.

Unification of Latium.

Unification of Italy.

Expansion beyond Italy.

Unification of the Empire especially in the west

7. *Primitive Rome*

Recent excavations have thrown a good deal of light on the earliest settlements on the famous hills of Rome. Leaving aside a Neolithic settlement on the Aventine, the first hill to be occupied appears to have been the Palatine. This hill possesses two humps. On the western hump there existed from the tenth century B.C. (at least) a rudimentary Latin village, the Germal, a colony from Alba.

By the end of the eighth century or beginning of the seventh other Latin villages had formed a cluster on neighbouring heights—and there appears to be evidence to confirm the tradition of an early league of seven hills, Septimontium, that is, of seven hill villages.<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that this group of Latin villages was in the nature of an outpost on the Tiber, thrown out by Alba, the original centre of Latium, to watch the Etruscans.

The language of the Septimontium was doubtless an early form of Latin. Originally the same as that of Alba, it would probably be modified more or less by successive Latin settlements and by contact with the Sabines on the Quirinal. There are, however, no contemporary documents. Our direct knowledge of Latin dates only from a later stage, after the Etruscan conquest, and indeed, apart from traditional archaisms,<sup>2</sup> after Rome had been sacked by the Gauls (390 B.C.).

There is evidence on the other hand to show that Latin as we know it, even with the oldest forms recorded, was not the original, or at any rate not the universal language of Latium.<sup>3</sup> We cannot, indeed, tell to what extent these primitive pastoral villages perched on low hills among marshes spoke the same dialect. Whatever may have happened before the Etruscan domination, it can hardly be doubted that the language of

<sup>1</sup> Germal and Palatual on the Palatine, Querquetual ('Oakham'); Fagutal ('Beechham'), Oppius, and Cispinus on the Esquiline; and Velia. On the Quirinal with the Viminal ('Willowham') there was a colony of Sabine highlanders.

<sup>2</sup> The XII Tables contain ancient material, but have been often re-edited, and comparatively modernized. The alphabet of Chalcidian Greek came in via Cumae (8th–7th cent. B.C.).

<sup>3</sup> The oldest documents of Latium are the brooch of Praeneste and the vase of Duenos (7th–6th cent. B.C.).



the considerable city developed by the Etruscans must have differed somewhat from rural dialects of Latium. The subsequent unification of Latium under the hegemony of Rome led to the superimposing of Roman Latin upon all other dialects of Latium. There were always local dialects, but the old non-Roman features tended to disappear.

#### 8. *Unification of Latium*

Primitive Latium consisted of some forty independent tribes inhabiting the region between the Tiber and its tributary the Anio on the north and north-west, the sea-coast from Ostia to about Porto d'Anzie on the south-west, and, roughly speaking, the Apennines on the east and the Lepini hills to the south-east. Much of the region was swampy and liable to inundation, especially near the Tiber. Their towns (*oppida*) or rather villages were built on hills. Their civilization belonged to the early Iron Age allied to that of the pile-dwellers in the valley of the Po.

In the centre of Latium the Alban hills formed a rallying-point or refuge for the Latin tribes, and Alba itself, though little more than a group of villages, became the centre of a league connected with the worship of Jupiter Latial whose abode was on Mount Cavo, the highest of the Alban hills.

From a political point of view the federation seems to have been very loose—local groups also seem to have been formed and frequently dissolved. Nevertheless, the hegemony of Alba seems to have been real enough at one time to provoke the characteristic jealousy of the other Latins—and the fall of Alba, not so exclusively the work of the Seven Hills as later Romans were pleased to pretend, made Latium an easy prey to the Etruscan invader.

After nearly a century and a half of Etruscan domination Latium was freed by the 'Revolution' of 509 B.C. (see above, p. 115). The Etruscans were defeated by the Greeks and Latins at the Battle of Aricia. This defeat reacted on Rome, and resulted in the fall of the Etruscan monarchy, the return to power of the old patrician families, and the organization of the Republic.

When Latium had thrown off the tyranny of Etruscan Rome, a new federation was formed.

Rome might hanker after the re-establishment of her hegemony, but for the moment she was too weak to attempt this. Her fortifications had been levelled by the Etruscan general, Porsenna, and conflict had broken out between the patrician population of the Septimontium and the plebeians of the Quirinal and Aventine. At the battle of Lake Regillus Rome saved her independence, threatened by the other Latin peoples.

Throughout the fifth century B.C. there was a movement of Sabellian mountaineers into the fertile plains. This highland push had its effects on the borders of Latium. While the old enemy, Etruria, was weakening, fresh strength was shown on the new fronts of the Sabines on the north, the Aequi on the east, and the Volscians, who had occupied the country to the south of Ardea with the town of Veletrac and had made Antium their port.

This pressure of enemies on four fronts, which seemed at one time to threaten the existence of Rome and of the Latins, resulted during the fifth century in welding these together. The hammer-blows of the Aequi and Volsci sweeping sometimes to the very gates of Rome<sup>1</sup> served to forge the army that was eventually to conquer the western world. A common danger brought about an alliance on equal terms between Rome and the other Latin cities.

### 9. *Unification of Italy*

An alliance with the Hernici threatened the Aequi and Volsci in the rear. Another alliance with the Etruscan city Caere across the Tiber cut off Veii, and Etruria proved too weak to render any help.<sup>2</sup>

Then Rome swept through southern Etruria and the Roman frontier was pushed up to the Ciminian and Sabatine hills. Thus at the end of the fifth century Rome, with her allies, had recovered for the Latins one stage of the empire

<sup>1</sup> e.g. Sabines 460 B.C., Aequi 462, Volsci under the banished Coriolanus.

<sup>2</sup> Etruria had already lost Campania (p. 116), and the Po valley (p. 116) had been invaded by the Gauls.

initiated by the Etruscans. Early in the fourth century the Latins succeeded in driving back the Aequi and Volsci. The Aequan country was occupied and Latin colonies extended to the south. The expansion of the Roman territory at the expense of Etruria tended to make Rome the dominant partner in the Latin alliance, but Latium did not submit without a struggle and then only after being hemmed in by widening Roman conquests.

A remarkable feature of the first half of the fourth century was the invasion by the Gauls. Various Celtic tribes crossed the Alps, doubtless in successive waves. Some probably came across the Western Alps, as Livy says, from the Gaul beyond the Alps (modern France), but others may have crossed farther to the east. However this may be, the Etruscans were defeated, and the valley of the Po (modern Lombardy) became Cisalpine Gaul with its centre at Milan. Here the invaders settled and merged with the rest of the population.

Their stage of civilization was inferior to that of the Umbrian cultivators and their Etruscan masters. There is no evidence to show whether the invaders learned Umbrian or to what extent they introduced their Celtic dialects. What is clear is that no Latin was then spoken north of the Apennines. Throughout the rest of the peninsula the Gauls came rather as bands of raiders than as settlers. In 390 they marched on Rome, and by their impetuous ferocity put the Roman army to flight. Panic seized the population, numbers fled to Veii.

Rome had no city wall, for Porsenna had laid flat the Etruscan fortification. The Gauls streamed in unresisted and burned a great part of the city. The Capitol held out, and the barbarians, having no skill in sieges, were bought off for a thousand pounds of gold. This incident, which incidentally destroyed all her written records, injured for a time Rome's prestige. South Etruria, the Volscians, the Hernici raised their heads and even some of the Latin cities like Tibur and Preneste seceded, hiring bands of Gaulish warriors to attack Rome.

All these difficulties were overcome, and in less than forty years after the catastrophe the Latins and Hernici had been brought to heel, and Rome was more powerful than before.

From about 350 B.C. Rome was the dominant power in central Italy. The fall of Etruria and the decline of Hellenism in Italy left the field open for Rome to become the leader and champion of Italy against the depredations of the Gauls.

In 358 the territory of the Volsci was annexed and Romanized. In 343 Rome intervened in Campania, protecting Capua against the Samnites. As a result Campania fell under Roman control and the cities of Latium found themselves surrounded by Roman territory.

Their claims to equal rights were rejected (340 B.C.), and in a short while Roman arms triumphed and the supremacy of Rome over all Latin, Volscian, and Hernican territory was established once and for all (338 B.C.). Every success of this kind discovered new enemies. The next great struggle was against the Samnites and their allies (327–290 B.C.).

The Samnites had formed an extensive federation of Sabelian tribes and before they were defeated brought into the field Etruscans, Umbrians, and Gaulish mercenaries.

The victory left Rome the mistress of Italy. There remained only Great Greece and Bruttium in the south and Cisalpine Gaul in the north still to be conquered.

The territory of Rome had now expanded to about 30,000 square miles<sup>1</sup> (282 B.C.).

Over all this area Latin was carried as the language of the ruling city. We shall touch shortly on some of the particular methods which were employed incidentally to propagate the use of Latin outside Latium, but it must not be supposed that all the other languages and dialects incontinently ceased to exist. Latin won its way step by step, and the process was not complete till about three centuries later.

The next step towards the complete unification of Italy was the absorption of the Greek cities in the south. The story of the decadence of Magna Graecia belongs to the history of Hellenism and the fortunes of the Greek language. It may be noted here that all the other languages with which Latin had come in contact, including Etruscan, possessed no

<sup>1</sup> Homo, p. 238: 80,000 square kilometres. This may be compared with about 360 square miles in the early days of the Roman Republic; 800 by 400 B.C.; 2,000 by about 343 B.C.; and 4,000 by 338 B.C.

literature and were, we may venture to say, cruder and less developed than Latin itself.

The Greeks, on the other hand, had introduced the alphabet to Italy and possessed a rich literature with a long tradition. Greek had been developed by a people with a strong sense of beauty, and had been refined by generations of poets, orators, and philosophers. Latin literature was largely based on Greek models. Later on the political domination of the Eastern Mediterranean by Rome failed to displace Greek as the official language of that region. In Italy itself, however, and in Sicily, in fact throughout the Western Mediterranean, including Marseilles and the Greek cities of Spain, Greek failed to hold its own. It would seem that these western cities were too far removed from the main currents of Hellenic life and speech to retain their language after their communications by sea had been cut, and they had lost their political independence under the Roman aegis.

There had been times when the Greeks appeared as serious competitors for the dominance of Italy. In 474 Hiero of Syracuse occupied Ischia. In 453 Syracusan admirals were at Corsica and the Isle of Elba. In 444 Athens was sending colonists to Naples. Even after the Sicilian disaster (413) and Aegus Potamoi (405) we find Dionysius the Elder of Syracuse (405-367) making allies in Italy even of the Gauls, and in 384 the Greeks effected a landing in Etruria. None of these efforts had permanent results. The Greek cities in the south of Italy found increasing difficulties in maintaining their territory against the inroads of Sabellian hordes from the interior. The weakness of their position on the sea-coast was intensified by their mutual jealousies, by the luxury which fights only with its gold, and according to some authorities by the foolishness of their demagogues.

Between 286 and 282 Roman garrisons were located at Locri, Croton, and Rhegium.

In 282 one Postumius was sent as an envoy from Rome to Tarentum to protest against the murder of certain sailors. 'The volatile multitude laughed aloud at his broken Greek.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Havell, *Republican Rome*, p. 135.

In 280 Tarentum invited Pyrrhus of Epirus to help the Greeks against the Romans. A capable general of the Macedonian school, Pyrrhus accepted the invitation and was joined by several contingents from cities in the south.

Everything depended on the attitude of the Sabellian tribes in central Italy. Pyrrhus made a dash to the very borders of Latium, but the Italian highlanders showed no sign of assisting him against Rome, and he had to retreat. The following year (279 B.C.) he attacked along the Adriatic coast with a large force including elephants, and gained the proverbial 'Pyrrhic victory'. The Senate refused to make terms with him. In 277 Pyrrhus was busy fighting the Carthaginians in Sicily. The Romans defeated several local tribes, and retook Croton. Tarentum sent frantic messages to Pyrrhus, who returned, but was this time himself defeated.

He left Italy, leaving his lieutenant Milo in command of the Acropolis of Tarentum. The other Greek cities gave up the struggle, but Tarentum as a last resort appealed to Carthage, who sent a squadron which anchored in the harbour.

The Epirot commander in the acropolis was glad to get a safe conduct home by capitulating to the Roman army. This was the end of Greek rule in Italy, and the territories of Rome were expanded to about 47,000 square miles. Apart from Cisalpine Gaul the whole of Italy was now dominated by Rome.

### 10. *Struggle with Carthage*

The next stage in the process is the struggle for Sicily between Rome and Carthage. As the power of the Greek cities declined, Carthage increased in strength. By occupying posts on the chain of islands from Sicily to Corsica she had closed the Tyrrhenian sea. It was inevitable that Rome should attempt to break this ring and that there should be a struggle between the two rivals for the dominance of the Western Mediterranean. This began in Sicily, where Rome found a reason to intervene on behalf of certain Italian mercenaries from Campania. The story of the Punic wars would take us far afield from Italy, and leads on to the empire held by Rome outside Italy at first by the Republic and then by the Emperors.

Here we are concerned only with those results which served to round off the boundaries of united Italy.

The immediate result of the First Punic War (264–241 B.C.) was the expulsion of the Carthaginians from Sicily. This followed Rome's first naval victory. Carthage had occupied certain fortified cities on the coast from which Syracuse, as champion of the Greek cities, had failed to dislodge her. In the interior of the island the inhabitants were Siculs or Sicans, primitive peoples, who were neither Punic, Greek, nor Italic, content to sell their produce to the cities of the coasts. As to what language these people spoke before they learned Latin, there is no record.

In 238 Carthage was compelled to cede Sardinia to Rome. The Punic cities on the coast were occupied by the Romans, who then undertook the subjection of the interior, an operation that lasted for several years. Indeed, some of the mountain tribes retained their independence for another fifty years. Here again we can only speculate as to the nature of the language which Latin displaced.

From Sardinia the Romans passed naturally to Corsica, on which Carthage had a slighter hold.

Installed at Alalia (237 B.C.) the Romans proceeded to reduce the interior to subjection. A durable peace was concluded in 231 B.C. which confirmed the Romans in the possession of the coastlands and left the mountains to the natives under the nominal protection of the Republic. The native language, like that of Sardinia, may or may not have been allied to Ligurian.<sup>1</sup>

At any rate there is no reason to suppose that the islanders had adopted either Greek or Etruscan. Previous to this period the sea would have been a barrier to colonization by any of the Italic tribes from the mainland.

### 11. *Cisalpine Gaul*

In 238 B.C. the Romans turned their attention to Cisalpine Gaul.

The Gauls, who had kept quiet throughout the first Punic

<sup>1</sup> Said to have resembled a language of north Spain.

War, now took alarm and invaded Roman territory as far as Clusium in south Etruria. The Romans, who had not yet recovered from their fear of the wild Celtic charges, mobilized an enormous army. The Gaulish army was utterly defeated (225 B.C.) near Cape Telamon, and the war carried into the invader's country. The Boii and Lingones were reduced to peace by 224. The Insubres, with their capital at Milan, came to terms in 222. The Cenomans and the Illyrian Veneti were already allies of Rome.

To round off the conquests in this direction Istria was conquered in 221 leaving only Piedmont and Liguria to be added later. In 218 two military colonies were founded at Placentia and Cremona. United Italy was thus carried across the Po to the foot of the Alps.

### 12. *Unification of Italy completed*

Thus the dominion of Rome has expanded from the Septimontium of pre-Etruscan days to the whole peninsula with the great islands and the northern plain. This political expansion has opened up the road for the expansion of Latin and the unification of Italy has paved the way for a linguistic unity. From this point onwards Latin is the common language of Italy, as afterwards it became the common language of the Western Empire, but this does not mean that the numerous local languages ceased to be spoken the moment that a new territory was annexed to Rome or another tribe was enrolled as an ally. The process by which the dominant language eliminated the others was doubtless slow and silent, but inevitably sure.

The formation of a linguistic unity was assisted by certain features of the Roman system of administration, viz. the Roman colonies, the Roman citizenship, and the army.

(a) *By 'Coloniae'.* In territories annexed by Rome the *coloniae*, composed of Roman citizens, possessing all the privileges of the citizenship, were reflections in miniature of the great City.<sup>1</sup> Each had its own Senate and on a small scale the other features of Roman political life.

<sup>1</sup> 'quasi effigies parvae simulacraque populi Romani.' Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, xvi. 13. 9.



Each colony, from Croton to Cremona, formed an outpost not only for the army, but also for Roman civilization and incidentally for the Latin language. While the Roman colonies were new towns, the older towns in the same areas became *municipia*, either autonomous or ruled by prefects appointed at Rome. The citizens of these municipalities were of the second class, not possessing the full rights of a Roman citizen, but it was possible to obtain promotion to the first class. In the federated territories the inhabitants enjoyed a considerable measure of autonomy, while the colonies, called Latin colonies, enjoyed only the *jus connubii* and the *jus commercii*. Citizens in the annexed territory served in the Roman legions, whereas the soldiers from federated cities or peoples served in the cohorts of the allies (*socii*). They had their own subaltern officers, but the higher command was reserved for Romans.

(b) *Citizenship*. To become a candidate for any office, under the republic, it was necessary to be a Roman citizen. In the division of booty, whether in money or in land, the Roman citizen was given twice as much as a soldier from a Latin colony. All these circumstances enhanced the value of the Roman citizenship, and made it a necessary step for every man of ambition. Latin was the only language in which any kind of distinction could be won.

(c) *Army*. During the twenty-three years of the First Punic War Italy was in a state of continuous mobilization. Legions and cohorts had operated in Sicily and Africa. At the end of that period, when Rome took the offensive against the Cisalpine Gauls, shortly before Hannibal's invasion, she could draw on a force of about 770,000 men. These campaigns, and the subsequent campaigns of the Roman army, while this was recruited mainly from Italy, must have had a great tendency towards the levelling of local dialects and the wider diffusion of the common language in varying degrees of correctness.

(d) *Literature*. To these factors were added those of trade, of a network of good roads, and eventually of the only literature in the country. Latin literature was an expression of the spirit of Rome. Leaving aside the Greek literature of an earlier period in the cities of the south coast, no other city, no

other people in Italy arrived at a consciousness of themselves demanding literary expression. At any rate Latin as a literary language encountered no rival in Italy, nor indeed for many centuries in the Western Empire.

‘With rare exception,’ writes Havell,<sup>1</sup> ‘the most eminent representatives of Roman culture were not Romans by birth. Yet we find in them all the true Roman spirit, and the Calabrian Ennius, the Volscian Cicero, the Sabellian Ovid, Horace born on the confines of Apulia and Lucania, Livy and Virgil natives of the great northern plain, and even the Spaniard Lucan, all use the same language and look to the great city as their common spiritual mother.’

The Roman republic was not conscious of a linguistic policy. There was no need. The results came of themselves with the expansion of Rome’s territory, administration, and influence. Looking at these results from a more modern point of view, the question might be raised whether the linguistic unification of Italy was altogether a good thing. Linguists might wish that some fragments of Etruscan speech had survived in a mountain valley, that the old Venetian and Messapian had left at least some traces, that Oscan and Umbrian were represented by some modern dialects, that Ligurian, Messapian, and the rest had not completely disappeared.

Regionalists may regret that the genius of Vergil did not find expression in the Gaulish language, or in Umbrian, that Ovid and Horace did not enrich some Oscan dialect. They might contend that the varied features of Italian scenery, of Italian rural life, could have been more fittingly reflected in half a dozen different tongues rather than in the uniform Latin dominated by the selfish arrogance of Rome.

No Italian, of any degree of patriotism, would accept such views. We are not speaking, for the moment, of the Empire, of all that Roman civilization brought to France and Spain. Considering Italy by herself, it can hardly be denied that the unification, under Rome, with the substitution of Latin for

<sup>1</sup> p. 154.

all the other languages and dialects, was an enormous advance along the path of progress, far more important than the curiosity of the linguist, or local sentiment.

Progress involves the widening of the sphere of communications and collective activity. Ancient Italy was a meeting-point of several races, and several cultures. The Italic tribes had as strong a tendency to independence, insubordination, particularism, and narrow localism as the Celtic tribes they had left in central Europe. This tendency was combated for several centuries by Rome, who had gained the notion of unification from Etruria,<sup>1</sup> and was able to apply it with more permanent results to her own kith and kin. What proved in the end an impossible task for Etruscan Rome was achieved by Latin Rome. To complete the work it was inevitable that all the other languages should disappear.

<sup>1</sup> Havell, p. 66, says: 'The Etruscans, in spite of their geographical position, were Orientals in character and the enemies of liberty and progress', and speaks of an 'Eastern despotism with all its degrading consequences'. This seems unfair at once to Etruria and to the Orient. The city-leagues and independent cities in Etruria do not reflect a strongly centralized despotism. Our notions of 'The Orient', from which so many elements of civilization came to Europe, should not be based on a picture of, say, Turkey in its decadence.

## CHAPTER VII

### EXPANSION OF LATIN OUTSIDE ITALY

#### 1. *Unable to displace Greek in the East, Latin follows Roman Conquests in the West*

IN the West, the Latin Language followed in the tracks of Roman conquest, whereas in the East the Romans were unable to displace Greek as the literary and administrative language. Latin literature was originally based on Greek models. For a long time the education of a Roman was considered incomplete unless he had studied at Athens. When Egypt (30 B.C.) and Asia Minor (64 B.C.) became Roman possessions, they continued to use Greek as they had done under the descendants of Alexander's generals. Roman officials, like Cicero, holding office in Asia had to conduct their business with the provincials in Greek. When the empire was divided, Latin became the official language of the eastern capital but could not hold its own against Greek. Centuries later, in Constantinople, Justinian's great law-books were compiled in Latin (A.D. 483-565), but it was found impossible to impose the Latin language upon the populace, which continued to talk Greek up to the Turkish conquest in the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

The expansion of Rome's dominion towards the west and north was partly at the expense of Carthage and partly the

<sup>1</sup> Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121-80) wrote his *Meditations* in Greek as the language of highest culture.

Constantine opened the proceedings of the first general council of Christian bishops (A.D. 325), called to discuss the Arian doctrine, with a short speech in Latin, which was translated sentence by sentence into Greek (G. F. Young, *East and West through Fifteen Centuries*, i. 409): 'The *Code*, the *Pandects* and the *Institutes* were all written in Latin, which Justinian (A.D. 483-565) in promulgating them declared to be the proper official language of the Roman Government, its senate and its tribunals and of the imperial court.

'Nevertheless, the later Roman Empire found it difficult to adhere to this principle. Even in Justinian's time, though Latin remained the official language and that affected by the court, while Greek was merely the language of the people, Greek was more commonly in use, even at the court, than Latin, that language not being understood by subordinate officials and soldiers. And within fifty years after Justinian's death Greek had gradually ousted Latin altogether.' (Idem, ii. 199.)

result of the subjugation of barbaric tribes, largely Celtic in Gaul and Britain, partly Celtic, partly Iberian, in Spain.

The Carthaginians had been driven out of the western half of Sicily and from the two large islands, Sardinia and Corsica, as the result of the *First Punic War* (268–241 B.C.). Carthage then sought compensation for those losses in Spain. In 227 she claimed all Spain up to the Ebro, but in 206 the younger Scipio drove her out of Spain, and after the battle of Zama (202), which ended the *Second Punic War*, she had nothing left outside Africa. The two provinces of Spain were established in 197 B.C. In the *Third Punic War* (153–146 B.C.) Carthage was 'deleted' and in consequence the new Province of Africa was organized.

The struggle with the Gauls was a long process. In 390 B.C., as we have seen, an invading horde forced their way to Rome and burned a great part of the city. Large numbers of them settled in the valley of the Po, a region previously occupied by Ligurians and Umbrians. This region was subjugated by Rome and formed into the Province of Gallia Cisalpina in 222 B.C. Roman customs were soon adopted and the province was united with Italy in 42 B.C. Vergil, Livy, Catullus, the two Plinys, and other well-known writers belonged to this province. It is noteworthy that Vergil, the greatest Latin poet, was by birth a Celt.

Across the Alps there were many tribes, mainly Celtic, without any definite cohesion.

Rome's first interest was to establish her land route to the Spanish Provinces. For this purpose she established the Province of Gallia Narbonensis (121 B.C.). This ran between the sea coast and the Alps and up the Rhone to Vienne. The ancient Greek city of Massilia (Marseilles) and its lands were annexed in 49 B.C., after the Gallic wars of Julius Caesar.

Farther Gaul, often spoken of as Long-haired Gaul (*Gallia Comata*), was divided into the three Provinces Aquitania, Lugdunensis, and Belgica, comprising modern France (less Provence) and Belgium with small portions of the adjoining countries.

Julius Caesar made two raids (55, 54 B.C.) into Britain, another Celtic-speaking country, but the conquest of this

island was left for Claudius, A.D. 43. There was much fighting before the new province was thoroughly subjugated. In A.D. 80 Julius Agricola pushed into Caledonia but early in the second century the Ninth Legion was destroyed in York. In 122 the Emperor came and built his Wall from the Tyne to the Solway. The fierce tribes in the north of the island were never subdued. Ireland was not invaded.

Latin became the language of all the Gauls and of the Spanish peninsula and in later forms is still established in that area, as it is in Italy and the great islands of the Mediterranean. In Africa Latin flourished and developed a peculiar literary style. It did not, however, succeed in ousting Carthaginian or the Punic language completely. The invasions of the Vandals, with subsequent quarrels between different Christian sects, weakened the resisting-power of the ruling classes. The Arabic invasion was swift and successful. Latin disappeared before the Arabic of the new conquerors and the Berber dialects of the hinterland.

Britain was abandoned by Rome and invaded by a series of Germanic tribes, who seized the more fertile lands in the east and south. The view long current was that the Latin-speaking Celts were destroyed, driven into the west, or reduced to the condition of serfs on the lands of the conquerors. We know at least that Celtic speech survived in the west and in the north of the island, but Latin disappeared.

To the north-west Trajan's campaigns against the Dacians (A.D. 101-2 and 105-7) resulted in the formation of the Province of Dacia, corresponding roughly to the present Romania. Here Latin has held its own against Thracian dialects and later on against Slavonic languages, which have added to the vocabulary, and against incursions of the Magyars. Thus we find modern Romanian descended from Latin but isolated from Italy by Slavonic tongues.

## SPAIN

### *2. Older Races and Languages*

It is difficult to determine what languages were displaced by Latin in the Iberian peninsula. Greek and Roman writers distinguish four groups of inhabitants:

- (i) Tartessians in the south and south-east.
- (ii) Iberian tribes in the east and north.
- (iii) Celtiberian tribes of mixed blood in the centre.
- (iv) Purely Celtic communities in the extreme north-west.

There were also some Phoenician towns in the south and a few small Greek cities in the north-east, founded by Massilia.

The Tartessians, also called Turdetes or Turdetani, are mysterious. They seem to have been highly civilized. They had considerable skill in sculpture and metal-work and are stated to have possessed historical records and a traditional literature which, it was claimed, had come down some thousands of years. Unfortunately no Greek or Latin writer has given us any details regarding that history and literature, or even told us anything about the Tartessian language. Place-names in this area often show labialized forms where the Iberians have a *k* or *qu*.<sup>1</sup> This may represent a difference of race, but affords no indication whether the Tartessian language was related to the Iberian dialects or not. Speculation has been busy with the origin of the Tartessians. They have been identified by some with the Atlantici described by Plato and Diodorus.<sup>2</sup> They are supposed to have come

<sup>1</sup> E. S. Bouchier, *Spain under the Roman Empire*, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Plato in the *Timaeus*, 25, gives the legend of the Island of Atlantis:

'For these histories tell of a mighty power which unprovoked made an expedition against the whole of Europe and Asia, and to which your city made an end. This power came forth out of the Atlantic Ocean, for in those days the Atlantic was navigable; and there was an island situated in front of the straits which are by you called the pillars of Heracles; the island was larger than Libya and Asia put together, and was the way to other islands, and from these you might pass to the whole of the opposite continent which surrounded the true ocean; for this sea which is within the straits of Heracles is only a harbour, having a narrow entrance, but the other is a real sea, and the surrounding land may be most truly called a boundless continent. Now in this island of Atlantis there was a great and wonderful empire which had rule over the whole island and over parts of the continent, and furthermore, the men of Atlantis had subjected the parts of Libya within the columns of Heracles as far as Egypt and of Europe as far as Tyrrhenia . . . the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared in the depths of the sea. For which reason the sea in those parts is impassable and impenetrable, because there is a shoal of mud in the way, and this was caused by the subsidence of the island.' (Jowett's translation.) This legend seems to reflect a confused traditional knowledge of the ocean beyond the

from the eastern Mediterranean along the African coast. They buried their dead and were indifferent sailors. On the other hand they are regarded as akin to the Iberians.<sup>1</sup>

The Iberians were more civilized along the coast but almost barbarous inland. As described by Roman writers they were evidently of the Mediterranean type, short, dark, and wiry. Small faces, strong cheek-bones, and prominent lower lips fit in with a long-skulled type. It is believed that there were infiltrations of this type from north-east Africa since the third millennium B.C. This has suggested Berber affinities for the Iberians and the possibility that their language belonged to the Hamitic family.

Attempts have been made to prove a similar kinship for the Euskarian language, which survives in the valleys of the western Pyrenees. The people who now speak this language are known as Basques. The name, which represents *Vascones* as recorded by the Romans and the modern Gascons in France, is said to be a misnomer and to have been applied erroneously to the speakers of the Euskarian language. This language has not been proved to be related to any other, in spite of many efforts. Connexions have been sought with Berber dialects, with Munda dialects in India, e.g. Santālī, and with many other languages. It is generally held that Iberian was not Euskarian.<sup>2</sup> There are short Iberian inscriptions, mostly on coins, but the decipherment of these has not thrown much light on the problem, as they generally contain only the name of a town. It is possible that at the time of the Roman conquest the dialects spoken in Spain were largely Celtic. This would account for the presence of place-names which appear in central Europe and for the labialization of similar names in the south of Spain. Against this we must set the archaeological evidence of the straits, of islands with shallower seas farther on, and of a powerful trading power in the West.

Diodorus, iii. 54. 9, describes the people of Atlantis as living in a rich country with large towns on the shore of the ocean, very civilized and worshipping the mother of the gods. See Bouchier, loc. cit., who quotes Philpon, *Les Ibères*.

<sup>1</sup> Haverfield, *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Spain'.

<sup>2</sup> It is thought probable that Euskarian was spoken by a people who arrived earlier than those known as Iberians.



'gradual Iberianization of almost all pre-Roman Spain' (*Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Iberian'). There are numerous Iberian coins which are later than the Roman occupation. Moreover, there seems to be very little Celtic vocabulary in Spanish that was peculiar to the peninsula, and place-names show only a small proportion of Celtic names in *-brig* and *-dunum*.

The Iberians have been regarded by some as Indo-Europeans. They cremated their dead and were hardy mariners. These features distinguish them from the Tartessians but may be due to the Celts.

As with the Ligurians our choice may lie between a pre-Aryan Mediterranean people, subsequently invaded by an Indo-European people, and a very ancient offshoot of the Aryan-speaking peoples which settled in Spain and was profoundly influenced by the older inhabitants. Thus the question becomes one of date and of the proportions of the mixture. There is really no evidence of any Indo-European language in Spain before the coming of the Celts, probably about 500 B.C. The Celtiberians, as the name suggests, were understood to be of mixed blood, Celtic tribes from Gaul having fused with the native Iberians. Though no Roman seems to have said so, we may perhaps assume that the language of these mixed tribes came to be Celtic, possibly modified by some phonetic peculiarities of the Iberian substratum.<sup>1</sup> In the north-west were tribes regarded as Celtic with little Iberian admixture—these tribes obviously spoke Celtic dialects.

The Phoenicians and Greeks had occupied only a few towns on the coast. Neither Punic nor Greek are likely to have been widely used in the peninsula, even at the time when Carthage claimed the control of all Spain up to the river Ebro.

### 3. *Roman Conquest*

Whatever may have been the character of the languages spoken in Spain at the time of the Roman conquest, Hamitic

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand some of the Iberians seem to have been more civilized than the Celts, who were a pastoral people. The Iberians used an alphabet in their cities, and may have imposed their language on the immigrant Celts in central Spain, just as later on the illiterate Visigoths learned Spanish and lost their speech.

or Celtic, they seem to have yielded to Latin within a few centuries.

The conquest itself was not easy. There were numerous Celtiberian revolts and guerrilla warfare among the mountains, in which the rebels often defeated large Roman forces. Even the Tartessian townsfolk hired Celtiberian warriors to fight the Romans. The fall of Numantia (133 B.C.) marks the beginning of the end and broke the back of Celtiberian resistance. Julius Caesar fought against the Celts in the north-west. The Cantabrian and Asturian mountaineers continued to give trouble till they were reduced by Augustus and then Agrippa.

By the end of Augustus' reign (A.D. 14) it is said that Spain was as Latin as Italy.

During these two centuries Roman institutions had been introduced and many Roman customs adopted. The building of roads and the working of mines proved to be useful means of opening up the country. Agricultural colonies were founded in which Spaniards and Italians were united. Small military stations were dotted about the country, often in the neighbourhood of Iberian towns from which they drew off both population and trade.<sup>1</sup>

The urban system, which was already familiar to the Tartessians, spread through Spain during the early empire and loose federations with their nominal kings disappeared.<sup>2</sup>

Strabo (first century B.C.) records that the Tartessians of his time had Latin rights, spoke Latin, and had almost forgotten their native language.<sup>3</sup> The gradual extension of Latin rights throughout the peninsula must have been accompanied by a widening knowledge of the Latin language. Many even of those who were not citizens adopted Roman dress. Between the reigns of Augustus and Hadrian, Latin came to be used largely in the south and centre of Spain. Iberian or Celtic was no longer used for public business or inscriptions, though they continued to be spoken by the common people for many generations, especially in small

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier, *Spain*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

villages of a few hundred agricultural or mining inhabitants with no municipal organization.<sup>1</sup>

In the larger towns Latin was cultivated with enthusiasm. Well-known writers like the Senecas, Martial, and Quintilian were Spanish, as were the great Emperors Trajan and Hadrian.

Christianity, firmly planted in Baetica early in the second century, had extended to the north and west in the third century.<sup>2</sup> Though the Church was not really strong before the second half of the fourth century, this organization must have assisted the spread of Latin.

When the Western Empire came to an end (A.D. 476) Latin was spoken throughout the peninsula except in the district occupied by the Basques. The Visigoths, whose invasions began A.D. 415 and who established an independent kingship in the course of sixty years, were illiterate for the most part. A feudal aristocracy was faced by a federation of municipalities and an organized church. The Goths lost their language and their Arian heresies. About the same time, the Iberian dialects are believed to have died out.<sup>3</sup> Celtic dialects are supposed to have died out earlier, leaving some slight influence on the pronunciation of Portuguese and Galician and a few words in the Spanish vocabulary.<sup>4</sup> The evidence for this does not seem to be very strong. If Pliny III mentions that Baetica was occupied by Celts from Lusitania, who were distinguished from neighbouring tribes by language as well as religion,<sup>5</sup> we cannot base any conclusion on the absence of a similar observation in later writers.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. *Disappearance of Other Languages*

Neither references in literature nor the evidence of archaeology give us definite evidence as to when the native dialects died out in the different areas. Romans noticed the Spanish

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier, *Spain*, pp. 32, 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 197.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 190.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> Seneca (d. A.D. 65) records that the Cantabrian dialect resembled that of Corsica (*Cons. Helv. VIII*, quoted by Bouchier, p. 193). Both may have been Celtic. The Cantabrians are mentioned with Celtic tribes as excellent horsemen.

accent and even laughed at Hadrian when he first spoke in the Senate, but they tell us hardly anything about the Tartessian, Iberian, and Celtic dialects. Iberian inscriptions come to an end with the Augustan age. Native words borrowed by Latin in Spain and so incorporated into Spanish or Portuguese afford us no guide unless we can determine the period when they were borrowed.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars must deplore the complete loss of the Tartessian literature, records, poems, and laws of great antiquity that the Romans did nothing to preserve. Like the fabled Atlantis it has sunk into oblivion. Yet any one who considers the geographical features of Spain and the character of the various peoples in Spain before the advent of the Romans must admit that the Tartessians could never have welded those wild tribes into a state or have imposed their language upon them.

Linguists may regret the disappearance of the Iberian dialects and of the Celtic dialects which have been completely displaced by some form of Latin speech. Yet it may be doubted whether a single patriot in the Iberian peninsula would really regret the Roman conquest or the spread of Christianity. Provincialism is still strong, as it has always been. Portuguese maintains its political and linguistic independence. The Catalans endeavour to do so. Galician and Aragonese have had their literatures. Castilian, the standard language which the great Spanish writers have used, has not been able to establish itself as the spoken language of the whole peninsula.

It would be a Herculean task to impose Spanish on the whole area, requiring some new movement not yet in sight.

Nevertheless, in spite of all this tendency towards regionalism, nobody would renounce his Latin birthright or for a

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier is probably not far from the truth (p. 197): 'In the conclusion, Iberian seems to have lasted in country districts till the fall of the Empire, but Latin was generally understood from at least the Flavian age'. Christianity helped to develop the latter, and again brought Spain into closer connexion with Rome and Italy. Latin was needed for communication with the barbarian conquerors, and Iberian probably died out during the Gothic monarchy, not without exercising some influence on the pronunciation and forms though little on the vocabulary of the new language which was in process of formation.

moment contemplate the adoption of some other language. If it would be difficult to make the Catalans adopt Castilian, it would be absolutely impossible to compel them to adopt Euskarian. Linguistic 'birthright' is not a question of race but of history and tradition.

## AFRICA

### 5. *Punic*

The Roman Province of Africa dates from 146 B.C. when the City of Carthage was destroyed at the end of the third Punic War.

Carthage had been founded by Phoenicians from Tyre in the ninth century B.C. Centuries earlier, the Phoenicians had trading posts on the coast of North Africa. Carthage claimed the trading rights of the Western Mediterranean and the control of the islands. Against Etruria she was successful, but in the long run Rome defeated and then destroyed her. Nevertheless, Phoenician or Punic, a Semitic language, continued to be used up to the sixth century A.D. in the maritime cities. In a few towns it was used officially until about A.D. 100, though not exclusively like Greek in the East. In certain towns, we are told, the Christian bishops were obliged to know the *lingua Punica* as this was the only language which the people understood.<sup>1</sup>

Even Augustine (354-430), speaking to a congregation at Hippo, said: 'I will speak to you in Latin as you do not all know Punic.' Gradually it ceased to be taught in the schools and by the time of the Arab conquest (seventh century) was quite extinct.<sup>2</sup>

### 6. *Libyans and Berbers*

The older inhabitants of this region, which extended from Egypt to the Atlantic, were known to the ancients as Libyans.<sup>3</sup> These were clearly the ancestors of the modern Berber tribes, who extend over the same area.<sup>4</sup> Where they

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, 14th ed., s.v. 'Africa, Roman'.

<sup>2</sup> Bouchier, *Life and Letters in Roman Africa*, 1913, pp. 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Egyptian inscriptions have the form 'Lebu' among other names.

<sup>4</sup> And as far as the Canary Islands.

have not adopted Arabic these tribes still speak dialects of what is practically one language which is, moreover, recorded in inscriptions of considerable antiquity.

This Berber language belongs to the Hamitic family and so is related to Ancient Egyptian and to Somali, and is distantly connected with, but definitely distinct from, the Semitic languages.

We may suppose that it was easier for the Libyans to coalesce with the Phoenicians and to learn their language than it was for them to learn Latin. Ultimately, as we shall see, Latin gave way to another Semitic language, namely Arabic.

The Berbers are a fair race with brown or hazel eyes, generally accepted as part of the Mediterranean race or type. Blue-eyed blonds occur and have led some authorities to suspect a European element, or even to class the Libyans as 'Indo-European'. The very fair type is not so numerous as has been supposed, and though it may represent some infiltration of northern blood, does not affect the general conclusion.

### 7. *Latin introduced*

Though Punic continued to be spoken in several towns on the coast, and the Berber language held its own in the mountains and among the cultivators of the rich cornlands in the hinterland, Latin also flourished, especially in the renovated Carthage, in Cirta and Caesarea, three provincial capitals.

In the time of Julius Caesar and Augustus a number of Italian colonies were founded, but the Italian element came to be strongest in Carthage. The Third Legion remained in Africa for three centuries. Colonies of veterans were formed as at Madaura where Apuleius was born. There were fortified posts to guard the passes and important roads from inroads of marauders from the south. Some towns were given Latin rights, but not many in the early centuries.

The externals of Roman civilization were adopted in many towns, as is shown by the remains of temples, amphitheatres, and other buildings. Painting, sculpture, and mosaic work flourished. There were public libraries in several towns. Travelling lecturers went from town to town.

### 8. *African Latin*

Latin developed an African style in literature with peculiarities of its own. Many archaic words and phrases, which survived in popular speech, were adopted in literature together with a number of new colloquialisms. A loosening of logical connexion was partly concealed in a wealth of imagery and a verbal richness that was unable to select the one perfect phrase and preferred to riot in an abundance of alternatives. This literature came into prominence in the middle of the second century, in the lifetime of Apuleius. Tertullian, a centurion's son (A.D. c. 155–c. 222), is said to have created Christian Latin literature. He was followed by Cyprian (A.D. 200–258) and in the next century came the great St. Augustine.

The development of Latin literature was centred mainly in Carthage, a large city, where a University gave training in oratory and rhetoric.

In the second century Christianity spread. We hear of martyrs in A.D. 180 and A.D. 198. There was a conference of as many as seventy bishops at Carthage.<sup>1</sup>

This development of Latin literature and the spread of Christian teaching does not tell us much regarding the progress of Latin as the language of the people. The Emperor Severus (A.D. 146–211) declaimed in public at the age of seventeen,<sup>2</sup> but he had to learn Latin as a foreign language and never shook off his African accent.<sup>3</sup> Punic, as we have seen, was largely used in many Christian communities. Cultivators in the hinterland must have used the Berber language, which still survives.

Latin was cultivated, but one forms the impression that it remained exotic.

Literary men 'combined a certain pedantry and exclusiveness with a genuine love of literature'.<sup>4</sup> On the other

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier, *Life and Letters*, p. 94. The Christian communities in Africa at first used Greek, but Latin translations of the Scriptures were soon made (p. 98).      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.      <sup>3</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Severus'.

<sup>4</sup> Bouchier, *Life and Letters*, p. 63. See also the description (p. 64) of the grammarians based on Gellius: 'They held learned banquets, at which a slave would read grammatical treatises aloud to the guests. Discussion

hand, there are numerous inscriptions in Latin verse of a barbarous sort, often in the name of very ordinary people.

In the third century, Commodianus adopted in his verse many irregularities which were current in popular speech. The verbal forms and the uses of genders, cases, and prepositions illustrate the changes in spoken Latin that were eventually to produce the Romance languages.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to determine which of these innovations started in Africa or was peculiar to that region, but it is here that they first found their way into literature and they indicate a considerable body of people using colloquial Latin.<sup>2</sup>

During the fourth century there was a kind of classical revival in the western provinces and African literature ceased to form a separate school.

### 9. *Vandals*

When the Vandals invaded the province (A.D. 429) its resisting power had been weakened by a decline in prosperity, growing disaffection among the indigenous tribes, and violent schisms among the Christians. The invaders, in fact, were assisted by marauding bands of Moors and by disgruntled schismatics who, like the Vandals, were Arians and hated the Catholics. The Vandals had little difficulty in seizing the province. Carthage was taken in A.D. 439.

Large landowners and influential priests were dispossessed and driven abroad. Like the Visigoths in Spain the Vandals established a feudal monarchy and for one generation retained their Germanic speech.<sup>3</sup> In order to communicate with their subjects they had to learn Latin. In succeeding generations these Teutonic kings were educated and the Vandals lost their German language, like the Visigoths in Spain and centuries later the Normans in France.

arose among literary men while waiting in the vestibule of the palace to salute the emperor, or when on a visit to a sick friend. The grammarian would spend his mornings in Trajan's library or wrangle with a rival about a point of accidence in the *Campus Agrippae*; or, if young and enthusiastic, use such a jargon of archaisms as to be supposed to be talking Gallic or Etruscan.'

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier, *Life and Letters*, p. 89; *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Commodianus'.

<sup>2</sup> But not necessarily as their mother tongue.

<sup>3</sup> Bouchier, *Life and Letters*, p. 107.



After holding their own for ninety years they were defeated by Justinian's general Belisarius (A.D. 533) and every adult male was deported.

### 10. *Byzantine Africa and the Arabs*

Africa, with somewhat constricted boundaries, now became a district of the Byzantine Empire.

Greek was placed on an equal footing with Latin as an official language and became familiar to African theologians, though not widely adopted as a spoken language.<sup>1</sup>

Before the end of the sixth century the production of Latin literature in the province had come to an end. The submergence of Rome and the Western Empire must have had an immensely depressing effect on writers of Latin.

In the seventh century came the Arabs (A.D. 647). Fifty years later Carthage was taken by the new conquerors. Latin seems to have given place very rapidly to Arabic. A few Christian congregations retained Latin for their religious services, while they used Arabic in daily life.<sup>2</sup> In the eleventh century all traces of Latin fade away.

## GAUL

### 11. *Celts*

The dominant language of Gaul at the time of the Roman occupation was Gaulish, a Celtic language of the Brythonic labializing group. There was also Ligurian in the south-east and Iberian in the south-west. There is very little evidence to indicate the extent to which Gaulish had displaced Ligurian in Gallia Narbonensis or Iberian in Aquitania.

The Celts, that is the people who developed the Celtic form of language, seem to have been settled in central Europe and to have expanded about 500 B.C., overrunning France between 500 and 400 B.C., taking lands from the Ligurians and Iberians who were there before them. The older peoples they did not destroy but overlaid them with a network of Celtic tribal settlements. There has been much discussion, often confused, as regards the physical type of the original Celts.

<sup>1</sup> Bouchier, *Life and Letters*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

It is clear that they could not have been people of the Mediterranean type, though many sections of the modern Celtic races are descended from that stock. The Celts, who settled in the northern plains of Italy, came from the mountains and were of the Alpine type—broad-headed, of moderate stature. A similar type or varieties of it appear in Belgium and France.

The Greek and Roman writers, it is true, describe the Celts as being of enormous height and very fair. This seems to have been an exaggeration, though indeed individuals of princely families may quite likely have been of Nordic descent. The Celts for a long time had a considerable influence on the Germans, as is shown by words borrowed from the Celts regarding warfare, law, and civilization.<sup>1</sup>

It is even more difficult to determine any racial distinction between the speakers of the two fundamental types of Celtic speech. Goidelic or *q*-speakers are now found in the extreme west of Ireland, the Isle of Man, and the Highlands of Scotland. The Goidels were the earlier arrivals who left the Celtic home in central Europe before labialization (giving *p* for *q* and *b* for *g*) had set in or become general. The Brythonic tribes remained longer and developed this change, whatever was the cause of it,<sup>2</sup> and came in later swarms, Picts, Gauls, and Belgae.<sup>3</sup>

## 12. Romanization

Gallia Narbonensis was rapidly Romanized. The Celts were mingled with the Ligurians in that region as early as the third century B.C.,<sup>4</sup> as is shown by the term 'Cello-Ligurians' used by Greek writers. Probably the Celts arrived at the end of the fifth century B.C., and never completely absorbed the Ligurians.<sup>5</sup>

The pleasant climate attracted Roman settlers. Cicero

<sup>1</sup> Hubert, *Greatness and Decline of the Celts*, p. 93. Hubert thinks the Goidel *q*-speakers moved west long before the labializers.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Rhys suggested a non-Aryan substratum. D'Arbois contested this (*Revue Celtique*, 1891, p. 477). Hubert, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>3</sup> Hubert, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301. Marseilles was attacked by a king with a Gaulish name about 400 B.C.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 302.

speaks of a crowd of Roman immigrants of various classes.<sup>1</sup> Colonies were founded, large estates belonged to Romans. The Latin citizenship was extended rapidly. Latin letters were cultivated and soon challenged the Greek culture centred in Marseilles.<sup>2</sup> Strabo (b. 63 B.C.) speaks of the people as being Romans in language and customs, and Pliny (first century A.D.) describes the country as being rather Italy than a province. Greek was largely used by the Christian Church and this usage has left its mark on Provençal, but there was no question of using Greek in daily life.

The variety of language current would tend to facilitate the progress of Latin.

In the Gaul of Long Hair, Julius Caesar distinguished three languages: that of the Belgae in the north, Gaulish, and the speech of Aquitania. The Belgae were also Celts speaking a Celtic language, though they are sometimes confused with Germans. The tribes of Aquitania were Iberian and were spreading into Gaul in those days. The nature of their language, as we have seen,<sup>3</sup> is doubtful. It has in the end given way to Latin in its Gascon form.

### 13. *Decline of Gaulish*

There is evidence of the spread of Latin, that is, a knowledge of Latin, in inscriptions and in the fact that Latin literature was read and even written by Gauls like Ausonius (c. 310–395). Many provincials occupied official positions in the administrative machine. There is, however, nothing to show how rapidly Celtic disappeared. Some have assumed that the change was soon complete, and quote the negative evidence of the absence of any Celtic inscriptions after the Roman occupation. Brunot shows how inconclusive this argument is.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, when Sulpicius Severus (c. 363–425), in a story about St. Martin, quotes the phrase ‘Tu

<sup>1</sup> F. Brunot thinks Cicero was exaggerating. *Histoire de la langue française*, i. 23.

<sup>2</sup> One could study Greek philosophy at Marseilles instead of going to Athens (Strabo, iv. 1). F. Brunot, *Histoire*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Hubert, *Greatness and Decline*, p. 212.

<sup>4</sup> Brunot, *Histoire*, p. 17.

vero vel celtice, vel si mavis, gallice loquere, dummodo Martinum loquaris', it is not certain that this means literally talking in the Celtic or Gallic language.<sup>1</sup> Latin had long been the medium of education and in the north became the main vehicle of the Christian religion. Soldiers and slaves became familiarized with the language of their masters and commanders. Latin was the language of the administration and of all but local trade. Nevertheless, Gaulish was not extinct in the fourth century.<sup>2</sup>

It is certain that eventually Celtic disappeared, with the exception of the language of Brittany which is that of later settlers from Britain (fifth to seventh centuries). It is also clear that when the Franks and other Germanic tribes came into France, Latin was strong enough to absorb the invaders.

This Latin was getting battered and began to take new and particular shapes, the beginnings of new groups of dialects in different parts of France, but there is no sign or word of any life in Gaulish at that time nor the least possibility of its revival.

## BRITAIN

### 14. *Celtic Languages*

At the time of the Roman conquest in the first century A.D. the speech of the British Isles was probably entirely Celtic.

Many waves of humanity had crossed the islands, but there is no definite sign of the survival of any language older than that of the Goidelic *q*-speaking Celts, who arrived in the latter part of the Bronze Age and have left their language in Irish, Manx, and the Gaelic of the Scottish Highlands and the western isles.

Much later came the Brythons and Belgae. The British of the south and east was of the labializing type, which now survives in Wales and Brittany. Cornish is now extinct,

<sup>1</sup> Brunot, *Histoire*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Brunot quotes the passage in Justinian's *Digest* allowing contracts to be made in Celtic and St. Jerome's statement about the Galatians speaking a language like that used by the Treveri in some forest districts. *Ibid.*, p. 34. *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Gaul', 75 b.

though a memory of the language and a knowledge of a few words still exists. Brittany was colonized from Britain when the Germanic tribes pressed into the interior.

### 15. *Romanization incomplete*

Britain was never completely subdued by the Romans. There was a good deal of fighting in the north and west, during the first two centuries. Nevertheless, the Romans established a number of garrison towns and in the south and east the Britons adopted Roman civilization. Latin became the official language in which inscriptions were written, and which must have been spoken by all educated people.<sup>1</sup>

Britain must have appeared to be on the way to become a Latin-speaking land. Yet in fact Latin completely disappeared, except for a large number of words in the Welsh vocabulary.

C. Hubert in his *Greatness and Decline of the Celts* has discussed the reasons for this contrast to what happened in Gaul. He notes that the Romanization of Britain was less general and less deep than in Gaul. The evidences of Roman culture are abundant only in limited districts. There was less municipal development. Up to the end of the third century the administration was still military.<sup>2</sup> We may add the climate as another factor and also the English Channel. These would discourage the lovers of comfort from Italy or South France from settling in Britain. The proportion of persons who spoke Latin and nothing else must have been much smaller than in Gaul. Of the legionaries, many were recruited in countries far from Italy. A bilingual stage affords no guarantee of the survival of the new language.

Moreover, the Saxons, Jutes, and Angles came over in larger numbers and occupied the ground more closely than the Normans in France or any of the Scandinavian settlements in the British Isles. The Saxon occupation of the

<sup>1</sup> 'By this time [beginning of the 4th cent.] the town population and the educated among the country folk spoke Latin and Britain regarded itself as a Roman land inhabited by Romans and distinct from outer barbarism.' (*Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Britain').

<sup>2</sup> Hubert, *Greatness and Decline*, p. 161.

coasts had begun two centuries before the arrival of Hengist and Horsa.<sup>1</sup> They were not merely an aristocracy of conquerors but farmers who tilled the soil. The Britons regarded them as barbarians and hardly as real Christians when converted. There was little amalgamation. As the Teutons advanced, large numbers of Celts moved to the west, and soon lost their Latin. There was a migration into Brittany, perhaps more than one,<sup>2</sup> bringing the British tongue where it still survives in France, but no Latin.

Britain was on the edge of the Roman Empire, and though Latin was the official language for five hundred years it did not displace the language of the people as it did in Gaul and Spain.

## DACIA

### 16

On the Danube, on the other hand, a military settlement among tribes of various races established Latin where it still survives in Romanian though detached from Italy by Slavonic languages. Probably it was the medley of different languages current along the Danube route that afforded Latin, as the language of civilization, the opportunity to survive.

<sup>1</sup> Hubert, *Greatness and Decline*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 167.

## CHAPTER VIII

### EXPANSION OF ARABIC

#### 1. *Arabic succeeds other similar Languages*

A STRIKING phenomenon in linguistic history is the rapid extension of Arabic in the seventh century A.D. over the regions of the Nearer East and North Africa. The language was carried by the Arab conquerors, whose strength lay not merely in the sword, but rather in the fire of a new faith—a puritanic monotheism—inspiring its devotees with an intense zeal and consuming a great tangle of older creeds and superstitions.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time we must remember that Islam has extended farther than Arabic as a spoken language, which involves a great deal more than the ability to recite the Qur'ān and the erudition of mullahs and maulavis.

Arabic has established itself outside Arabia in Mesopotamia, Syria as far as the frontier of Asia Minor, Egypt, and the littoral of North Africa.<sup>2</sup> It has profoundly influenced Persian and through Persian the speech of Muslims in India and Central Asia. Its influence can also be traced in Central Africa, and in regions as far apart as Spain and the Malay Archipelago. At one time it was spoken in Spain, Sicily, the Balearic Islands, Pantelleria, and Madagascar. In the area where Arabic has replaced spoken languages, or influenced them most profoundly, the facts of military conquest and of religious conversion do not provide an adequate explanation. On the other hand, the previous linguistic history of these countries indicates that they were likely to prove favourable to the development of a language of this type, for they had long been accustomed to the use of languages more or less similar to Arabic.

<sup>1</sup> Eastern Christianity was split into numerous sects, often differing on fine points of dogma and often persecuting each other with great ferocity. There were Arians, Manichaeans, Monophysites, Nestorians, Eutychians, Jacobites, and Monothelites!

<sup>2</sup> As well as in Western Sahara, Nigeria, the Sudan, and Zanzibar.

To go a step farther, it may be observed that the country occupied by Arabic is largely of the same type—not seldom sandy desert with barren hills and rocky strongholds, and with but a limited area of oases and fertile valleys.

These regions have been described as ‘the land of the camel’, and no language is so rich as Arabic in words descriptive of all varieties of camel and of everything connected with its needs, uses, and habits. This is a land of hard life and stern reality. In the softer, more luxurious lands of Spain and Persia, Arabic lost ground after early successes.

## 2. *Arabic follows other Semitic Languages*

Arabic was by no means the first Semitic language to be introduced into Iraq, Iran, and Syria. It should, moreover, be borne in mind that Semitic languages resemble each other very closely in their structure and vocabulary. The *Hamitic* languages also (e.g. Ancient Egyptian and Coptic) resemble the Semitic tongues in several features of their general character. At the dawn of history one Semitic language, Assyrian or Babylonian, written in cuneiform, occupied Iraq and had displaced the older Sumerian. In the course of time it came to be used as the medium of international correspondence, as is shown by the famous tablets of Tel-el-Amarna in Egypt (see p. 59).

Mention has also been made of the development of Sabaeen, in South Arabia, as early as the ninth or eighth century B.C. To about the same period belong the earliest Aramaic inscriptions. Aramaic was originally the language of the Aramaeans, a branch of the Semites in the north. It was closely allied to Hebrew and Phoenician, and came to be the language of clerks in the Persian Empire. From the seventh century B.C. there are Phoenician inscriptions recording the dialect<sup>1</sup> of the enterprising traders from Tyre, who founded Carthage and many other cities in the Western Mediterranean. This is the language that the Romans called Punic and largely displaced in Northern Africa. Earlier than these inscriptions was the development of Hebrew literature. Hebrew became

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew and Phoenician are but dialects of one and the same language. (Nöldeke.)



the sacred language of the Jews, but was replaced by Aramaic as the spoken language of Palestine. Much later are the earliest records of Ethiopic (A.D. 350) in the Sabaean. The oldest inscriptions carved in stone or on rock are in a script that is clearly derived from the ancient Himyaritic script of South Arabia and of Arabic (A.D. 500).

### 3. *Hebrew*

It is not certain when the Hebrews entered Palestine. They had been preceded by an earlier wave of Semites known generally as Canaanites, whose speech resembled, but was not identical with, Hebrew. The coming of the Canaanites may belong to the third millennium B.C. About the fifteenth century B.C. Palestine is revealed by the Amarna tablets as occupied by a Semitic people under the lordship of the Egyptians, and threatened by the attacks of nomadic tribes on the east.

Amongst these hostile invaders mention is made of the Habiru, whom some have identified with the Hebrews, but this identification is by no means certain.

Palestine was situated on the borderland of Egypt and Assyria, exposed to attacks from the Euphrates and from Egypt as well as from Bedouin tribes on the east. Its population was, in consequence, of a mixed origin. The Philistines are described as of a northern type and regarded as 'giants' by the Hebrews.

The early history of the Hebrews in Palestine is obscure and the biblical stories often difficult to fit in with what is known from other sources. At all events, Hebrew and its sister tongue Phoenician seem to have become the dominant languages by about 1000 B.C., and the oldest portions of the Old Testament, such as the Song of Deborah, belong to this period or are even earlier. Unfortunately, the language was written in a script that ignored vowels and the doubling of consonants. Vowels were only noted centuries later with diacritical marks borrowed from Aramaic. In the eighth century B.C. Israel was subdued by Assyria, and large numbers of people were carried away into exile. A similar fate befell the kingdom of Judah at the beginning of the sixth century.

Fifty or sixty years later there was a return from exile and reconstruction under the Persian Empire.

How many people were affected by these movements we can only guess—very probably the peasants in the fields were not disturbed, and only the more troublesome people were removed from the towns—princes, prophets, and their followers. Certainly these happenings must have promoted the use of Aramaic, widely used as the language of clerks and traders throughout the Assyrian and Persian Empires.

It is in the post-exilic period that Judaism takes on its definite and distinctive characters, that is, about the middle or end of the fifth century B.C. During the next century the use of Aramaic, which had become the language of Syria, spread more and more among the Jews, and was even used for the latest portions of the Old Testament.

Hebrew ceased to be the language of the people and became that of religion and the schools.

By the time of the Maccabees Hebrew was no longer a living language. It was preserved as a school language, borrowing a great deal from Aramaic, and a knowledge of it was preserved throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup>

The historical importance of the language lies not so much in the history of the Jews, who gave it up for Aramaic and then learnt nearly all the languages of the world, but rather in the fact that the oldest scriptures of the Hebrews were adopted by the Christians, and that many of the Jewish traditions are common to other Semites and have been accepted by Islam. At the same time Hebrew literature is remarkable in itself for its simplicity, vigour, and lyric force. Hebrew was the only Semitic language before Arabic to produce any literature of any importance.

#### 4. *Aramaic*

The original home of Aramaic is said to be unknown.<sup>2</sup> The Aramaeans took their name from Aram in the north and north-east of Semitic lands in the direction of Syria and

<sup>1</sup> A corrupt form of the language, which arose in Germany, called Yiddish (meaning 'Jewish') is still used by Jews in Europe and produces some original literature.

<sup>2</sup> Nöldeke, *Ency. Brit.*

Mesopotamia. More important historically than the original home of this language is the development of Aramaic writing. This script was more cursive than several other Semitic scripts and much more so than the cumbrous cuneiform system. It seems probable that it was in origin a trader's script and that the Aramaeans occupied in the East much the same position as the Phoenicians in the West. If Aramaic writing was invented somewhere on the way from Mesopotamia to Syria and Egypt, it is not surprising that the use of this new 'shorthand' extended rapidly along trade routes and came to be used in imperial offices. In fact, wherever it started, the use of Aramaic spread rapidly through Syria and then in Palestine. It spread farther down the Euphrates and Tigris and in part of Armenia.<sup>1</sup> Nöldeke,<sup>2</sup> indeed, thought that in Babylonia and Assyria 'the larger part of the population were most probably Aramaean even at a very early date, whilst Assyrian was the language of the Government'.

Whether the evidence supports that conclusion may be doubted. Nöldeke shows that inscriptions and coins prove the use of Aramaic as the official language of the Achaemenid provinces west of the Euphrates. In Egypt, inscriptions and papyrus documents show that the Persians 'preferred using this convenient language to mastering the difficulties of Egyptian writing'. Here, as hinted above, seems to lie the real clue to the popularity of Aramaic as a language of clerks and traders.

Aramaic possessed a convenient alphabet, which could be written quickly. Though like all running hands it was liable to become ambiguous,<sup>3</sup> it must have been a great relief to the writer used to the complexities of cuneiform writing, which, as we have seen, had been applied to several other languages besides Sumerian and Assyrian.

It might be objected that the new script could have been adopted, without at the same time adopting the Aramaic language. There is often, however, a tendency to associate

<sup>1</sup> A mutilated Aramaic inscription of about the sixth century B.C. has been found at Taxila.

<sup>2</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> This defect is seen in Pahlavi writing and in Kharoshti, both derived from Aramaic.

a script with its original language, and in Assyrian the consonantal skeleton of a word was often almost the same as in Aramaic.

Later on in the Sassanian Empire the middle stage of Persian (Pahlavi) was written in a modified form of the Aramaic script, but for a great many words the conventional Aramaic spelling was retained, though the Persian word was quite different. Thus the scribes would write the equivalent of LHM, the Semitic consonantal outline for 'meat', and pronounce it 'gosht'. This spelling of Pahlavi is an extreme case of the sort of thing we see in the English symbol £ for 'pound' and *d.* for 'penny'. It illustrates the tendency for Aramaic spelling to be associated with the Aramaic script.

Nöldeke suggests that the 'preference for Aramaic originated under the Assyrian Empire, in which a very large proportion of the population spoke Aramaic'. The evidence seems to indicate the use of Aramaic as a written medium (necessarily confined to a very small percentage of the population) and as a means of communication between Assyrian officials and Jews. This will account for the instances quoted of an Assyrian official speaking Aramaic (2 Kings xviii. 26; Isaiah xxxvi. 11) and for the fact that 'dignitaries of Judah learned the language to communicate with the Assyrians'.

That is very far from proving anything about the speech of ordinary people in Mesopotamia at that time, or about the proportion of Aramaeans in the population. The lack of dialectal variation in these earlier records of Aramaic also indicates a clerkly written language rather than a popular speech extended over so wide an area.

In Syria, however, the language established itself, so to speak, in the soil. It doubtless replaced the remnants of Hittite and other non-Semitic languages. It probably modified and then replaced the remains of other Semitic dialects as in Palestine it replaced spoken Hebrew.

Farther afield, as in Iraq, a trader's language would have its influence in the bazaars on trade routes, but we lack evidence to show how far it affected the speech of the people at large. Later on in Christian times it was at Edessa in Syria that a slightly modified Aramaic, strongly influenced

by Greek, developed a literature. This literary language, known as Syriac, is still used by the Syrian Christian Church both in Syria and in Malabar.

In the Sassanian Empire Syrians took part in the development of this Syriac literature, and, according to Nöldeke, 'In the Eastern Roman Empire Syriac was, after Greek, by far the most important language, and under the Persian kings it virtually occupied a more prominent position as an organ of culture than the Persian language itself.'

In Persia, at any rate, the speech of the people was not replaced, though it may well have been influenced by Aramaic and then Syriac in the towns.

In the Nabataean kingdom (not far from Damascus), which was suppressed by Trajan, Aramaic was spoken in the north and Arabic in the south, but the Nabataean Arabs wrote in Aramaic, as their own language had not been reduced to writing.<sup>1</sup> This is a clear instance where the writing of Aramaic proves nothing as regards spoken speech or race.

Certain differences grew up between Western Aramaic (including that of the Bible, Palmyra, and Nabataea) and Eastern Aramaic as used in Babylon in the fourth to sixth centuries A.D. It may well be true that in the centuries immediately preceding the advent of Islam the use of spoken Aramaic had become sufficiently general in Iraq as well as Syria to give rise to genuine dialectal differences.<sup>2</sup>

It was at Edessa that, in the course of time, the differences between spoken and written Syriac attracted notice.<sup>3</sup>

Efforts made in the seventh century to systematize the grammar and standardize the vowels revealed differences between eastern and western pronunciation, which were also associated with subtle distinctions of dogma, as between Monophysites and Nestorians.

<sup>1</sup> Nöldeke, *Ency. Brit.*

<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, local pronunciations of a literary language may reflect the phonetic systems of other spoken languages. Compare various pronunciations of Latin in Europe and of Sanskrit in India.

<sup>3</sup> The dialect of Edessa was used as a literary language even before the second century A.D. The Peshitta translation became the 'bible of Aramaean Christendom. Christians in Persia used this dialect for the purposes of the Church, literature, and cultivated intercourse' (Nöldeke).

The predominance of Aramaic or Syriac was ended by the spread of Arabic, but had paved the way for the younger rival both as a written language and in areas used to a Semitic speech as the language of the people.<sup>1</sup>

### 5. *Beginnings of Arabic*

The language known as Arabic arose in the middle regions of Arabia, including Nejd and Hejaz. Nejd is the central core of rocky desert, with numerous valleys and oases, while to the north and south extend vast expanses of sandy waste. Hejaz is that part of the mountainous rim that lies between Nejd and the Red Sea and contains the cities of Mecca and Medina. Beyond the sandy desert towards the north, Semitic speech had taken the forms of Hebrew, Phoenician, and Aramaic. Below the great empty desert (at Rub'al khālī) towards the south the kingdoms of the Minaeans, Sabaeans, and Himyarites used a different form of the same language generally known as Sabaean to which Ethiopic is related.

The first standard of Arabic was not fixed by the towns but among the nomadic tribes. Arabic had formed a literary language before the advent of Islam. Bedouin tribes were accustomed to meet each other from time to time, and such occasions were celebrated by feasting and the recitation of poetry. The fame of some poets, like Imru'ul-Qais, extended far beyond the range of single tribes, and it is clear that a Bedouin poet did not confine himself to the words of his own tribal dialect.<sup>2</sup> Thus there grew up a common poetic dialect understood by all. The Bedouin dialects are not likely in fact to have differed very much from each other. Language changed more slowly among the nomads than in the towns. Even in the second century of Islam the Bedouin were considered to be the possessors of pure Arabic, and learned grammarians used to consult uneducated Bedouin.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Even Christians began to abandon Aramaic and spoke Arabic like others. By the seventh century A.D. Aramaic was used less and less. In the eleventh century books were written for Christians either in Arabic or in parallel columns of (learned) Syriac and spoken Arabic. (Nöldeke.) Syriac is now a dead language in Syria and Aramaic survives only in a few dialects near Mosul and in the Kurdistan mountains.

<sup>2</sup> This pre-Islamic poetry was collected and written down after the advent of Islam.

<sup>3</sup> Nöldeke, loc. cit.

This poetic language continued to be used and, influenced by the Qur'an, became the standard language of all later Arabic literature.<sup>1</sup> The Qur'an, revealed from time to time in sections to the Prophet Muhammad, was compiled under the orders of Khalifa 'Umar, both being members of the Qureishi tribe. Nevertheless, Classical Arabic was not founded on the dialect of that tribe. The Qur'an, in spite of its paramount importance for religion and tradition, is said to have had 'but very little influence upon the poetry of the following century and upon that of later times, whereas this poetry closely and slavishly copied the productions of the old heathen period'.<sup>2</sup>

The ordinary speech in towns like Mecca and Medina was naturally not so conservative and was not regarded as correct. In the second century of Islam the grammar was standardized and correct language defined. Originally the language of poets and of the aristocracy, it became also that of business and science.<sup>2</sup>

There were 'gradations' writes Nöldeke, 'between pedantic purity and a vulgar dialect and sensible writers used a sort of *κοινή*'—that is, a common standard language not identical with any local dialect or with the purest form of the traditional literary language.<sup>3</sup>

While Arabic was used only in Arabia, the differences between the various dialects were probably not considerable, but when Islam and the use of Arabic spread more widely the differences became more marked. There has been some doubt as to how far this was due to the foreign languages with which Arabic came into contact and to those which it superseded. Nöldeke thought that these languages had little effect, and that the dialectal differences as between the Arabic of Syria, Egypt, and Spain arose spontaneously among the speakers of Arabic, who came to be separated from each other. On the other hand, some of the local modifications of pronunciation are likely to have been affected by older speech-habits.

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, 14th ed., s.v. 'Arabic literature'.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> For the Greek *κοινή* see Chap. V.

### 6. *Arabian Conquests*

The rapidity of the Arabian conquests can be indicated by the following dates:

A.D. 622. Islam established as a secular power.

630. Capture of Mecca.

632. Arabia united (for the time being).

634-44. Second Khalifa 'Umar.

Persia defeated. 'Iraq subdued. Kufa and Basra founded.

635. Damascus taken.

636. Jerusalem captured.

639. Governorship of Syria instituted.

640. Invasion of Egypt.

641. Alexandria captured. Fostat (afterwards Cairo) founded. Subjugation of Persia.

644-56. Third Khalifa Othman. Conquest of Armenia, Asia Minor, and Carthage.

652. Defeat of Byzantine fleet off Alexandria.

It is not to be supposed that the conquests of these thirty years indicate a universal change of creed and of language in all these regions, but they opened up the way.

At first, indeed, the Arabs abroad regarded themselves as armies of occupation and the new foundations, such as Kufa and Fostat, as military camps.<sup>1</sup> Under the Omayyads, these new towns became great cities, with a numerous and mixed population. The tribes of Arabia were always jealous of each other. The Qureishi tribe and the Omayyad family found it easier to dominate the lands and cities outside Arabia, which ceased to be of primary political importance, especially when Medina ceased to be the capital and the Khalifas ruled in foreign cities, as Damascus (A.D. 658) and Baghdad (A.D. 760). In the track of these armies and radiating from these great cities came the preachers of Islam, who laid more permanent foundations than any generals who converted their prisoners by the fear of death.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, 14th ed., s.v. 'Arabia'.

<sup>2</sup> In fact the Arab conquerors were very tolerant towards Christians, many of whom embraced Islam. Persecution arose later, either when non-Muslims gave trouble or when Islam was extended by new converts who were not Arabs. Sir Thomas Arnold, *Preaching of Islam*.



Arabic was the language of administration<sup>1</sup> and of the Islamic religion. It was the language of all schools countenanced or supported by the new rulers. Arabic replaced Aramaic as a clerical language and became the dominant literary language throughout these dominions. Exactly how fast and by what stages it replaced other languages as the medium of ordinary conversation it is much more difficult to determine.

### 7. *Arabic in Persia*

Long before the Arabian conquest in the middle of the seventh century A.D. Persian had been subjected to a strong Semitic influence. As we have seen, the oldest Persian records were recorded in a variety of Assyrian cuneiform. The oldest Iranian scriptures, the Avesta with its commentary called Zend, were written down in a cursive Semitic script resembling Aramaic which was in general use during the Sassanian period (A.D. 226–637). We have seen also how Aramaic spelling was retained in the writing of Pahlavi or Middle Persian.

When the Arabs came, Aramaic was in general use for clerical purposes. In Iran, as elsewhere, Arabic, which now had a script of its own, rapidly replaced Aramaic. Hence Arabic naturally became the official language in Iran, apart from the fact of conquest.

Arabic in Egypt and Syria came into closer contact with the Greek world than Pahlavi had ever done, and consequently it was quite natural that books on science, history, and geography, as well as works on theology, came to be written in Arabic. It might seem more surprising that poetry and literary prose also were written in the language of the conquerors, and some very fine poetry, and prose too, written by Persians.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Abd ul Malik (A.D. 685–705) made Arabic instead of Greek or Persian the official language of administration. Steps were taken to improve the Arabic script by the use of vowel-marks borrowed from Syriac and of diacritical marks above or below consonants. Nicholson, *Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> Vergil, of course, was a Celt and several distinguished Latin authors were not Latins. Nicholson (*Literary History of the Arabs*, p. 277) states of numerous non-Arabs, who wrote in Arabic, that they did so 'because down to about A.D. 1000 that language was the sole medium of literary expression

As a matter of fact Middle Persian did not produce any poetry of importance and there was no native medium ready for poets, when the Arabs came, and apparently no poetic tradition. It was not until the national revival began in the tenth century A.D. that Firdausi fashioned a new medium for poets that served as the basis of Modern Persian. This literary language, still spoken by the cultivated and now used with minor modifications as the official language of the kingdom, has been profoundly influenced by Arabic. At the present time there is a movement to avoid unnecessary Arabic (and Turkish) words and promote the use of pure Iranian.

All the time the Iranian dialects continued to be spoken in the villages and small townships—influenced more or less by the dominant Persian. These are not merely the dialects of Persian but also the related dialects, as on the Caspian and in the Pamirs, and those of what are now regarded as distinct languages, e.g. Kurdish, Pashtu, Balochi.<sup>1</sup>

For the moment we are not concerned with the history of these Iranian dialects. The important fact is that they have survived in spite of the general spread of Islam.

### 8. *Arabic and Greek*

Greek had continued as the language of administration in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and of the eastern half of the Empire when it was divided. Alexandria, in Egypt, became a great centre of Greek learning and speculation, rivalling and even surpassing Athens.

In Byzantium, Greek held its own and continued to do so right down to the time of the Turkish conquest in the fifteenth century. The Christian Churches in the East used several languages, e.g. Syriac, Armenian, Coptic, as well as Greek, which was the language of the Orthodox Church supported by the Emperors at Byzantium.

in the Muhammadan world, a monopoly which it retained in scientific compositions until the Mongol invasions of the 13th century'. 'The Arabs', he says, 'had no literary traditions or intellectual development; engrossed in military and administrative commands they left literary avocations to the Persians.'

<sup>1</sup> In the Middle Ages, Sogdian was used as a literary medium in Central Asia. Another Iranian language known only in manuscripts from Central Asia has been designated as Tocharian A or Saka.

This is an indication, which is supported by other evidence, that Greek was a language of culture and administration, which made but little headway as the ordinary speech of the people outside Hellas itself.

On the mainland and islands of Greece the language still survives both as a literary language—with a tendency to archaism—and in popular dialects. In Greek cities on the coast of Asia Minor the language was spoken by Greeks living among the Turks until they were expelled in the twentieth century. Outside these areas Greek was never a vernacular.

The Arab conquest of Syria and Egypt reduced the area of the Byzantine Empire, and Arabic became the language of administration. Before long it became also the language of culture and science in these countries. Eventually, Arab philosophy and medicine were based on the Greek systems. Aristotle was studied in Arabic for centuries when his works were unknown in Europe. It does not appear, however, that the Arab conquerors in the sixth century set themselves at once to study Greek.

Alexandria was taken in A.D. 640, after resisting for fourteen months, by the general Amr, who became very popular with the Egyptians. The removal of this general gave rise to rioting, which gave the Byzantine Emperor an opportunity to retake the town.<sup>1</sup> Amr was sent back and he turned the tables, defeating the Greeks and demolishing the fortifications. Alexandria rapidly declined. It would naturally be deserted by students and teachers from Greece. There are stories about the fate of the great library, as for example that the books furnished a six months' supply of fuel for the public baths. The accuracy of these stories is questioned, but under the circumstances the library was not likely to be preserved and in fact it disappeared.

Most of the famous Arabian philosophers are said to have had no knowledge of the Greek language, although they were well acquainted with the teaching of Plato and Aristotle. It seems that Greek thought came to the Islamic thinkers

<sup>1</sup> During the long siege Heraclius had not sent a single ship. *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Alexandria'.

through translations into Arabic. The Arab tradition as preserved in the *Kitāb al-Fihrist* (i. 242) describes the earliest band of translators as 'a group of Greek philosophers settled in the capital town of Miṣr, conversant with Arabic'. They translated from Greek and Coptic for Khālid, son of Yazīd, son of Nūr al-'Uzza (*d.* A.H. 84). Many of the early translators bear Christian names.

In Egypt the Greek influence was already waning in the seventh century A.D. The Orthodox Greek Church, supported by official persecution and oppression by the Byzantine authorities, had made the Greeks very unpopular. From 616 to 629 there had been an interlude of Persian rule under Chosroes II, after which the Greeks had returned and proved themselves more oppressive than before; so the Arab conquerors seem to have been welcomed as deliverers from the tyranny of Byzantium. Large numbers of Egyptians embraced Islam as quickly as they had adopted Christianity.

In such conditions it is obvious that Greek could offer no resistance to the spread of Arabic. As to how soon the masses adopted Arabic as their ordinary language of daily life, no details are recorded. In any case the language displaced was not Greek.

Later on, in the ninth century A.D., Arabic came into contact with Greek in Sicily. Panormus was captured in A.D. 831, Messina in 843, Syracuse in 877, and by 965 the whole island was under Muslim rule. During the two and a half centuries that the Muslims ruled in Sicily they were tolerant. Christianity and the Greek tongue never died out. Greek and Arabic were the two written tongues of Sicily when the Normans came.<sup>1</sup>

The Normans under Roger I spoke French and opened the way to extensive settlement by Italians, especially Lombards from the north. Latin Christianity and Italian speech made headway and gradually Greek and Arabic died out.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Sicily'.

<sup>2</sup> French 'remained the court speech during the 12th century and Sicily was thrown open to all speakers of French, many of whom came from England'. 'But French was only a language of society, not of business or literature. The languages of inscriptions and documents are Greek, Arabic,

9. *Arabic and Latin*

Going farther west along the littoral of North Africa the Arabs met with greater resistance. It took half a century to subjugate the Roman province and Carthage.<sup>1</sup>

Greek had been introduced alongside of Latin. Punic continued to be used. None of the three appear to have had much effect on the Berber dialect of the hinterland. The Christians had been greatly weakened by their internecine feuds. As a result, once the country had been conquered, Arabic soon replaced Greek, Latin, and Punic, both for literary and vernacular purposes all along the coast. Inland the Berber dialects still remain.

By the time that Islam reached Spain, the Latin speech of that country had developed peculiarities that distinguished it from the speech of Italy, and in the stories of the struggles of Moor and Christian in Spain we hear of Spanish rather than of Latin, the language of the Church. Consequently this part of the history of Arabic dovetails into the story of the Romance Languages. In this place it may suffice to note only a few important facts regarding the spread of Arabic in Spain.

The conquest began with the invasions of A.D. 711 and 712 by mixed hosts, led by a minority of Arabs.<sup>2</sup>

and Latin, in private writings sometimes Hebrew. The kings understood Greek and Arabic, and their deeds and works were commemorated in both tongues. Hence comes the fact, at first sight so strange, that Greek, Arabic, and French have all given way to a dialect of Italian. . . . The Lombards had hardly a distinct language to bring with them. At the time of the conquest, French had already become a distinct speech from Latin; Italian hardly was such. The Lombard element . . . shows itself . . . in occasional words and forms. And if any element, Latin or akin to Latin, had lingered on through Byzantine and Saracen rule, it would of course be attracted to the new Latin element and would help to strengthen it. It was this Lombard element that had the future before it. Greek and Arabic were antiquated, or at least isolated, in a land which Norman conquest had made part of western Europe and Latin Christendom. Even the French element was in some sort isolated, and later events made it more so. But the Lombard element was constantly strengthened by settlement from outside.' *Ency. Brit.*, loc. cit.

<sup>1</sup> Now a Byzantine Province. See Ch. VII, §§ 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> In 711 there were 300 Arabs and 7,000 Berbers; in 712 the invaders included Arabs, Syrians, Copts, and Berbers. Arnold and Guillaume, *The Legacy of Islam*, p. 5.

The Berbers, whom the Arabs despised, were given the worst lands and often revolted. These Muslim conquerors defeated the last Visigothic king, and meeting no strongly organized resistance crossed the Pyrenees in 718, captured Gallia Narbonensis, and harried Gaul for fourteen years until they were defeated by Charles the Hammer at Poitiers in 732. Owing to revolts of Berbers in Africa the invaders had to abandon their forward movement, though they retained Narbonne, which had been a Visigothic kingdom.

The Arabs formed a small minority of the invaders, but they were the rulers and imposed their language on these motley hosts. They were welcomed by many people in Spain.<sup>1</sup> Numerous Visigoths became Muslims and intermarried with the conquerors. Jews escaped from persecution and serfs regained the possibility of personal freedom. The country districts were still largely pagan. Those who remained Christians were well treated.

The Muslims quarrelled freely among themselves, and the general anarchy was increased by the Berber revolt of 740. In 756 'Abdu-r-Rahmān the Umayyad established order with a slave army composed of many races and established the Amirate, which afterwards became the Khalifate of Cordova. All these slaves in the army had to learn Arabic and even Christians who lived under Muslim rule learned to write Arabic and used the Arabic script for writing Latin and Romance.

In the ninth century A.D. a Christian writer, Alvaro, complains of the strength of the Arabic influence on the Christians in Cordova.

'My fellow Christians delight in the poems and romances of the Arabs; they study the works of Mohammedan theologians and philosophers, not in order to refute them, but to acquire a correct and elegant Arabic style. Where to-day can a layman be found who reads the Latin commentaries on Holy Scriptures? Who is there that studies the Gospels, the Prophets, the Apostles? Alas! the young Christians, who are most conspicuous for their talents, have no knowledge of any literature or language save the Arabic; they read and study with avidity Arabic; they read and study with

<sup>1</sup> *Ency. Brit.*, s.v. 'Spain'.

avidity Arabian books; they amass whole libraries of them at a vast cost, and they everywhere sing the praises of Arabian lore. . . . Christians have forgotten their own tongue, and scarce one in a thousand can be found able to compose in fair Latin a letter to a friend! But when it comes to writing Arabic, how many there are who can express themselves in that language with the greatest elegance, and even compose verses which surpass in formal correctness those of the Arabs themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Alvaro was a prejudiced, inaccurate writer, but doubtless there was considerable cultivation of the Arabic language at this time. On the other hand, even Muslim rulers in Cordova spoke the Romance dialect derived from Low Latin which was the parent of the modern languages of the peninsula. It is stated that from the third or fourth generation after the conquest most of the Spanish Muslims were bilingual, whether descended from Arabs (Berbers, &c.) or from Spanish Christians.<sup>2</sup>

In the tenth century there was an outburst of fanaticism among the Berbers and also among the Christians.

In the eleventh century the Reconquest begins, and by the middle of the thirteenth century the Muslims retained only Granada and some ports. The Kingdom of Granada lasted till 1492.

The Christian victors drove out the Muslims or baptized them, and Arabic naturally lost ground. In the fifteenth century, when Cardinal Jimenes de Lisneros, an uncompromising prelate, attempted to convert the 'Moors' of Granada, producing only a revolt, he is said to have caused 80,000 Arabic volumes to be burnt at Granada, and Arabic was anathematized as 'the rude language of an heretical and despised race'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dozy (trans. F. G. Stokes), *Spanish Islam*, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup> J. B. Trend in *The Legacy of Islam*, p. 7, who mentions 'the four languages in use in Muslim Spain':

- (1) Classical Arabic, the language of men of letters;
- (2) Colloquial Arabic, the language of administration and government;
- (3) Ecclesiastical Latin, a merely ritual language associated with a particular form of worship; and
- (4) A Romance dialect, mainly derived from Low Latin, but destined to become (under the name of Romance castellano or Spanish) one of the great international languages of the world, by the side of English and Arabic.

<sup>3</sup> *Spanish Islam*, p. 268.

In the end Arabic failed to establish itself in Spain, though it left a considerable impression on Spanish, but nothing comparable to its effect on Persian.

This was due to the small number of the Arab colonists, who were not reinforced by large accessions, to the fundamental difference of Arabic from the dialects of the peninsula, and to the anti-Muslim feeling of the Reconquest heightened by the fanaticism of the Berbers.

### 10. *Arabic Dialects*

Being spoken over such a wide area, from Iraq to Morocco, Arabic has naturally developed a number of dialects. These all tend to clip the old grammatical system; there are local variations of pronunciation and of vocabulary. Essentially they are all dialects of the same language, and literates all over this area read the same classical language. No new languages have arisen as the Romance languages French, Spanish, Italian, &c., have arisen out of Latin, or as the modern Indian languages Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, &c., have arisen out of Sanskrit. Moreover, according to Nöldeke, no living Arabic dialect diverges from classical Arabic so much as French or Romanian from Latin.

Arabic covers Iraq, Arabia, Egypt, and a large section of North Africa.

Its position as a world language is sometimes exaggerated by assigning it to all Muslims.<sup>1</sup> Of seventy millions of Muslims in India only a minute percentage can either read or speak Arabic. The same is true of Turkey and Iran.

In an attempt to give the statistical order of the languages of the world according to the number of speakers, L. Tesnière places Arabic twelfth on the list, with about thirty-seven million speakers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare, for example, the statement quoted from *The Legacy of Islam*, above, p. 165, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Tesnière, *Statistique des langues de l'Europe*, appended to A. Meillet, *Les Langues dans l'Europe nouvelle*, 2nd ed., 1928. His figures are approximations, but there seems no doubt that there are more speakers of the following languages than of Arabic: Chinese, English, Russian, German, Spanish, Hindustani, Japanese, Bengali, French, Italian. The figures for Turkish and Turki are more doubtful.



Islam possesses a scriptural language in common, as the Roman Church possesses Latin, but like that Church has no common spoken language.

The present trend of national development in Islamic countries is likely to reduce the importance of Arabic in those countries where it is not the speech of the people.

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